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**Subject:** Morning Clips – Thursday, July 28, 2016

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## Morning Clips – Thursday, July 28, 2016

### Governor Nikki Haley News:

**Post and Courier:** Joint committee formed to tackle state pension fund woes

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160727/160729447/joint-committee-formed-to-tackle-state-pension-fund-woes>

Gavin Jackson

Top state lawmakers announced Wednesday they are forming a joint committee to study ways to fix the financial woes of the state pension fund — a fund that teachers, police, state and local employees rely on for retirement. Senate President Pro Tem Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, and House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Hartsville, created the 12-member committee to find reforms to the underfunded pension system for more than 500,000 public employees, retirees and their beneficiaries. “This committee will take into account all the relevant factors involved in making this system as strong as possible,” Leatherman said. “I’m confident we’ll roll up our sleeves, work together and make sure South Carolina honors its obligations in a fiscally responsible way.” Meeting dates have not been announced.

**NOTE:** Last month, the State Fiscal Accountability Authority voted to raise state employee and employer retirement contributions by 0.5 percent each. The contribution increases will help offset the pension fund’s 1.6 percent rate of return last fiscal year — far short of the 7.5 percent expected rate. The problem is compounded increased benefit costs and fewer state employees paying into the fund, among other drags.

**NOTE:** Leatherman abruptly left the June 22 meeting, reportedly for another meeting, and did not vote on the increase. Gov. Nikki Haley, who chairs the authority, said a “new guard” way of thinking was needed to remedy the pension fund’s \$23 billion shortfall.

**Greenville News:** Potential gubernatorial candidate warns of pro-union sentiment

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/money/business/2016/07/27/potential-gubernatorial-candidate-warns-pro-union-sentiment/87615182/>

Rudolph Bell

A potential Republican candidate for governor warned members of the Greenville Chamber Wednesday that pro-union sentiment may be growing in South Carolina. Catherine Templeton, a Charleston resident who ran the state Department of Health and Environmental Control under Gov. Nikki Haley, spoke to the chamber’s Legislative Committee and Manufacturing Roundtable. She cited the results of a 2015 survey taken by the Palmetto Shield, an alliance of business groups, that she said showed majority support for organized labor among people who had lived in South Carolina for five years or less. “It’s a shocking result, especially for those of us who were pretty sure we were anti-union,” Templeton said. She said South Carolina has been growing fast and has a “new demographic that we need to be aware of. And it’s only going to continue to become more of a majority.”

**NOTE:** Echoing the anti-union rhetoric of Haley, Templeton accused organized labor of using “dishonorable” tactics in trying to penetrate the “greenfield” state of South Carolina, which historically has had one of the lowest unionization rates in the country.

**The State:** U.S., Columbia chambers to hold veterans job fair at Fort Jackson

<http://www.thestate.com/news/business/article92187827.html>

Jeff Wilkinson

The U.S. and Columbia chambers of commerce along with other partners will host a job fair at Fort Jackson for active duty military personnel, veterans and their spouses on Tuesday. The fifth annual Hiring Our Heroes-Columbia event is open to all veterans and spouses regardless of rank or branch, including National Guard members and reservists. About 100 local and national employers are expected to participate. The job fairs held at the fort's Solomon Center have become more important in recent years because of budget cuts spurred by the drawdown of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, said retired Maj. Gen. George Goldsmith, chairman of the Columbia Chamber's military affairs committee. "We are really committed to trying to help service members, particularly those getting out of service, because of the cutbacks," he said.

**NOTE:** Hiring Our Heroes was launched in 2011. The first Hiring Our Heroes event in Columbia was held at Fort Jackson in 2012, kicked off by Gov. Nikki Haley.

**NOTE:** The project is a nationwide initiative to help veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses find meaningful employment. It has helped hundreds of thousands of veterans and military spouses find meaningful employment through more than 1,000 job fairs in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and overseas military installations.

**Post and Courier:** As U.S. demand for Sprinter grows, Mercedes-Benz Vans readies its North Charleston manufacturing site

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160727/160729486/as-us-demand-for-sprinter-grows-mercedes-benz-vans-readies-its-north-charleston-manufacturing-site>

David Wren

The reason Mercedes-Benz Vans decided to build a Sprinter manufacturing plant in North Charleston is simple: The U.S. market can't seem to get enough of the tall, boxy commercial vehicles.

"Production follows the market," Bobby Hitt, the state's Commerce Secretary, said Wednesday as Mercedes-Benz Vans broke ground on a \$500 million facility at Palmetto Commerce Park.

"Companies want to produce where they sell." Mercedes-Benz Vans sold 28,600 Sprinters to U.S. customers in 2015 — it's fifth consecutive year of record growth and an 11 percent increase over 2014 totals. Sales are up 16.5 percent so far this year. By the time the North Charleston plant starts producing vans at the end of this decade, the company expects to be selling at least 40,000 vehicles per year throughout North America. That growth rate gave Mercedes-Benz Vans the confidence to invest in a manufacturing site here after more than a decade of re-assembling German-made vehicles at the North Charleston location.

**NOTE:** "Today, we are writing automotive history in North Charleston," Mornhinweg said during a ceremony that also included Gov. Nikki Haley, U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham and other political and business leaders. "The groundbreaking also marks an important milestone for our growth strategy: Mercedes-Benz Vans goes global."

**Forbes:** Mercedes Breaks Ground On Its \$500 Million Sprinter Van Plant In South Carolina

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jaclyntrop/2016/07/27/mercedes-breaks-ground-on-its-500-million-sprinter-van-plant-in-south-carolina/#5e7ada377290>

Jaclyn Trop

Mercedes-Benz broke ground Wednesday on a \$500 million addition to its commercial van factory in South Carolina in a bid to beat competitors by building the next-generation Sprinter stateside and sidestep a steep tariff. The ceremony marked a major step toward the German automaker's vision for

aggressive growth in the U.S., the Sprinter van's second-largest market. The half-billion dollar investment will expand the Ladson, S.C., plant, where Mercedes currently assembles the Sprinter, as well as its new smaller Metris commercial van, after components shipped from Europe arrive at the Port of Charleston. Moving the Sprinter's production to North Charleston will pump U.S. sales by allowing Mercedes to build more vans, deliver them faster, and cut costs. A 25% tariff on imports including pickup trucks and commercial vans, known as the "chicken tax," has kept the Sprinter at a competitive disadvantage against the segment-leading Ford Transit and other large commercial vans.

**NOTE:** "What I want you to know is what we've said from the very beginning: we've got your back," Gov. Nikki Haley told Mercedes executives and factory workers.

**NOTE:** Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) applauded Mercedes' strategy to avoid the tariff and said that it would boost Sprinter van sales throughout North America. "Wouldn't it be nice if you could have a world where you can trade between Germany and South Carolina without all that mess?" he said.

**WCIV:** Gov. Haley: Daimler expansion a 'huge thing for SC'

<http://abcnews4.com/news/local/haley-daimler-expansion-a-huge-thing-for-sc>

The ceremony for the Daimler groundbreaking in North Charleston was packed wall-to-wall Wednesday. There was also big news on production and jobs. The \$500 million plant will build Mercedes-Benz and Freightliner vans. It will also bring 1,300 jobs. But the good news doesn't stop with the plant. The Daimler North Charleston facility is expected to also create a need for more than 400 jobs with suppliers. Company officials said 2015 was their best year ever with 321,000 vans sold. They said they expect the North Charleston plant to lead the company into the future. Company officials said the U.S. is the second-largest market in the world for the types of business/transport vans the plant will manufacture.

**NOTE:** "It's a huge thing for South Carolina to be chosen as the only North American site for a new facility," Governor Nikki Haley said at the ceremony Wednesday. Haley was one of many state level and local leaders in attendance at the event. She thanked current workers for Daimler who made the expansion a possibility, and she said it's South Carolina's job to "wrap our arms around this company and not let go."

**WIS:** Guardians of the Night is going to the dogs

<http://www.wistv.com/story/32557964/guardians-of-the-night-is-going-to-the-dogs>

Dawndy Mercer Plank

This Saturday, if you put your two feet to the pavement, you'll be helping those on four feet fight crime. The Guardians of the Night K9 5K run and walk raises money to outfit the K9 team of the Richland County Sheriff's Department. Arko is a Belgian Malinois. He's almost 10 years old. He's highly trained and highly intense on following his master's commands. He's the partner of Lt. Kevin Hoover with the Richland County Sheriff's Department. Arko is one of the 16 dogs on the department's K9 unit. To care for the K9 deputies, the department will hold its sixth annual Guardians of the Night K9 5K run and walk. It raises money to care and outfit the K9 team, including making sure each one has a bulletproof vest. The K9s find illegal drugs, missing adults and children, detect bombs, protect their handlers and are able to run, chase and apprehend criminals in places too difficult for a human to maneuver.

**NOTE:** For his leadership of the K9 team, Hoover received a high honor last March with a certificate of appreciation from Governor Nikki Haley on behalf of the governor's office and the people of South Carolina. Hoover credited his entire unit, always mindful of those on the team who die in the line of duty.

**Berkley Independent:** Unemployment up in county, down across state

<http://www.berkeleyind.com/20160728/160729777/unemployment-up-in-county-down-across-state>

Berkeley County saw its unemployment rate increase slightly during the past month, rising to just below the state average. According to the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce, Berkeley County's jobless rate jumped from 4.5 percent in May to 5.2 percent in June. A year ago the jobless rate stood at 5.8. Even with the increase, the county had the eighth lowest unemployment rate in the state. Neighboring Dorchester County was number seven, and Charleston County posted the lowest unemployment rate at just 4.6 percent. The state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased in June to 5.4 percent from 5.6 percent in May, marking its lowest level since July 2001. South Carolina's employment level reached another historic high with 2,185,181, gaining slightly in June as 109 people found work.

**NOTE:** Gov. Nikki Haley acknowledged the decrease in unemployment. "Great things are happening in our state. Thanks to the hard work of our employers, employees and Team South Carolina, we are able to celebrate a 15 year record low unemployment rate - but we aren't finished," Haley said. "Today's announcement is all the motivation we need to stay focused on things like workforce training, tax relief and investments in our students so we can keep the momentum going."

**Berkley Observer :** Public Notice Regarding Elimination Of High School Exit Exam

<http://www.berkeleyobserver.com/2016/07/27/public-notice-regarding-elimination-high-school-exit-exam/>

The General Assembly recently passed legislation titled Act 155, and it was signed into law by Governor Nikki R. Haley on April 14. The law states in part "Beginning with the graduating class of 2015, students are no longer required to meet the exit examination requirements set forth in in this section and State Regulation to earn a South Carolina high school diploma." Any former Berkeley County student who is no longer enrolled in a public school and who previously failed to receive a high school diploma or was denied graduation solely for failing to meet the exit exam requirements (BSAP or HSAP) may petition the Berkeley County school board to determine their eligibility to receive a high school diploma. This bill covers students from the graduating class of 1990 to the graduating class of 2014. The Berkeley County School board will transmit diploma requests to the South Carolina Department of Education in accordance with Department procedures, which are included below.

**Democratic National Convention:**

**Associated Press:** Obama passes baton to Clinton, imploring nation to elect her

<http://bigstory.ap.org/ef1e6ef5a5084ed495619b2acb3aca00>

Kathleen Hennessey and Bradley Klapper

Hillary Clinton has the stage. Stepping out of the shadows of presidents past, the former first lady, senator and vanquished-candidate-turned-secretary-of-state appeared unannounced on the platform at her nominating convention, pointed a finger at President Barack Obama and gave him a hug. Clinton had just been anointed the inheritor of Obama's legacy with his vigorous endorsement speech, the candidate who could realize the "promise of this great nation." "She's been there for us, even if we haven't always noticed," Obama said Wednesday, imploring the country to elect the woman he defeated eight years ago. Summoning his most famous line from that campaign, Obama said: "If you're serious about our democracy, you can't afford to stay home just because she might not align with you on every issue. You've got to get in the arena with her, because democracy isn't a spectator sport. America isn't about 'Yes he will.' It's about 'Yes we can.'"

**Associated Press:** Analysis: Obama hopes Clinton can fix what he could not

<http://bigstory.ap.org/53ce25c6812841c8af1c8ab5b7bb8511>

Josh Lederman

Eight years ago, Barack Obama cast himself as the rare candidate who could transcend the polarizing "politics of the past" and bridge divides that had left Washington barely functioning for years. Ultimately, the gulf was too wide — if anything, the political climate in the United States worsened. So, standing before the last, biggest audience he has left, Obama on Wednesday found a successor to carry forward the hopes and aspirations that once rallied millions to his side. "It can be frustrating, this business of democracy. Trust me, I know," Obama told an adoring audience as he extolled Hillary Clinton for president. "Hillary knows, too." While Obama gushed over his former rival and possible successor, his own credentials to make that argument seemed weakened by the long list of goals he tried unsuccessfully to fulfill. The mere fact that the country is considering electing Donald Trump — Obama's opposite in so many ways — is a stark reminder that many Americans reject his approach.

**Post and Courier:** Emanuel AME shooting survivors urge action on new gun laws in emotional appeal at DNC

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160727/160729420/emanuel-ame-shooting-survivors-urge-action-on-new-gun-laws-in-emotional-appeal-at-dnc>

Emma Dumain

The television cameras and the eyes of thousands of delegates were trained on Democratic National Convention's stage, where Polly Sheppard and Felicia Sanders, two survivors of the Emanuel AME Church shooting, stood. Farther to the back of the Wells Fargo Arena, members of the South Carolina delegation were reeling with memories of the Charleston hate crime that claimed the lives of nine black parishioners last year, including church pastor and state Sen. Clementa Pinckney. Sheppard and Sanders took the stage here Wednesday evening to share their stories of losing their loved ones, the grace of forgiveness, and the urgent need to enact gun safety legislation now. They were introduced for their very brief remarks by the actress Angela Bassett, who recalled how the tragedy prompted the removal of the Confederate battle flag from South Carolina's Statehouse grounds. It was at this moment, before Sheppard and Sanders stepped onto the stage, that state Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter began to cry. "As soon as they said, 'the Confederate flag,'" the Orangeburg lawmaker said later, her face crumbling. "It just brought back all those memories."

**Post and Courier:** South Carolina Democrats settle into Day 3 of DNC, live from Philadelphia

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160727/160729459/south-carolina-democrats-settle-into-day-3-of-dnc-live-from-philadelphia>

Emma Dumain

**5 p.m.:** South Carolina's delegates to the Democratic National Convention had the afternoon off before returning to the Wells Fargo Arena for the third session of the week. With two of the four days of the event behind them, many members of the group used the opportunity to reflect on festivities thus far. Kathy Hensley of Lexington County, her credentials lanyard loaded down with political buttons and pins from past and present conventions, said South Carolina had the best seat assignment this year of the past four Democratic conventions she has attended. She said she noticed less advertising than in years past, perhaps, she said, due to the fact that corporate sponsors declined to participate at Donald Trump's nominating convention in Cleveland last week. "They'd go all the way up to the ceiling," Hensley recalled. "I loved it. I love all the pieces." Jane Pulling from Pinopolis, who originally came to Philadelphia as a delegate for Bernie Sanders, said she was now excited to nominate Hillary Clinton, the first woman to lead a major political party ticket.

**Aiken Standard:** Day 3 of DNC: Aiken convention attendees discuss Clinton's nomination

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/20160727/160729573/day-3-of-dnc-aiken-convention-attendees-discuss-clintonx2019s-nomination>

Dede Biles

Democrats made history Wednesday night in Philadelphia when they formally nominated Hillary Clinton. She is the first female presidential candidate for a major political party. "Whether you are a Democrat or a Republican, or a male or a female, you should celebrate this," said Aiken City Council member Lessie Price, who is a member of the Democratic National Convention's Credentials Committee. "All of America should celebrate this because such strong strides have been made in this country to get a female as a presidential candidate." During Clinton's unsuccessful bid to earn the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination, Price served as co-chairwoman of her campaign in South Carolina. That connection to Clinton allowed Price to enjoy Tuesday night in the Wells Fargo Center even more when Clinton finally became the party's top choice to run for the nation's highest office. "I took pride in it personally because of my little teeny part in history," Price said. "In 2007, I arranged for Hillary to visit Aiken, and I introduced her (to the crowd) at the H. Odell Weeks Activities Center."

**The State:** Hillary Clinton win SC? 'It's more realistic that we'll be invaded by Martians'

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article92190122.html>

Avery G. Wilks

Asked about the odds of Hillary Clinton winning South Carolina in this fall's presidential election, Clemson University political scientist David Woodard replied: "It's more realistic that we'll be invaded by Martians." South Carolina has not voted for a Democratic presidential candidate in four decades, and pundits do not expect that streak to end in November. Even Democrats acknowledge Clinton's chances of beating GOP nominee Donald Trump in the Palmetto State are slim. But as Clinton celebrates her presidential nomination in Philadelphia, some within the party hold out hope she could pull off a historic upset. "She has a chance," S.C. Democratic Party chair Jaime Harrison said. "It's definitely not a slam dunk, but she definitely has a chance. (President Barack) Obama got 45 percent here in 2008 and 44 in 2012, and that was without the national party putting a lot of effort into South Carolina." Former S.C. Democratic chair Dick Harpootlian said Clinton's odds improved to "improbable" from "impossible" with her selection of U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia as her running mate and the GOP's nomination of controversial real estate mogul Trump.

**McClatchy DC:** North Carolina GOP mistakenly attacks Kaine for 'shameful' Marine pin that honored his son

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/election/article92302632.html>

Elizabeth Koh

When Democratic vice presidential nominee Sen. Tim Kaine addressed the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia Wednesday night, the North Carolina GOP thought it quickly spotted something wrong. "[Tim Kaine] wears a Honduras flag pin on his jacket but no American flag," the state party tweeted as he was speaking. "Shameful." There was one problem: Kaine's pin, which had a single blue star on a white background bordered with red, wasn't the flag of Honduras, where he spent a year as a missionary decades ago. It was the symbol for Blue Star Families, or those with members serving in the military. Ben Amey, a reporter for WNYT, caught their mistake...

**Post and Courier:** DNC delegate spotlight: Melissa Watson

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160728/160729446/dnc-delegate-spotlight-melissa-watson>

Emma Dumain

Melissa Watson was “fired up and ready to go” for Barack Obama in 2008, to quote the campaign’s famous slogan coined, coincidentally, by Edith Childs of Greenwood. But by the time 2016 rolled around, Watson was “with her” — that is, Hillary Clinton. The second vice chairwoman of the Berkeley County Democratic Party and a high school teacher, Watson said eight years ago it was difficult for her to choose between the two Democratic front-runners for the party’s presidential ticket. Obama won her support, she recalled, because of his promise to unify the country, a pledge that resonated with so many Democrats at that time. Watson eventually became especially excited about Clinton, however, during her tenure as Obama’s Secretary of State. “She came in and helped Barack Obama be successful,” Watson said. “It showed a different side of Hillary Clinton than I had never seen before, just a willingness to put aside everything in her campaign to go with him.”

#### **Greenville News :** SC convention delegation gains energy from younger members

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/politics/2016/07/27/delegation-benefits-from-younger-members/87640336/>

Brian Tumulty

The Democratic National Convention here this week proved the South Carolina state party has been energized by young adults who were involved in the presidential primaries. Fifteen of the state delegation's 59 members -- 25 percent -- are under 40, according to Jaime Harrison, the state party chairman. “Many state parties struggle with getting young people involved,” he said Wednesday. Democrats in South Carolina, a state that reliably votes Republican in presidential elections, are working to infuse their ranks with young adults. Harrison said when he took over as state chairman, the average age of a county chairman was “60 plus.”

#### **SC Political News:**

#### **The State:** SC lawmakers to tackle troubled state retirement system

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article92201902.html>

Jamie Self

S.C. House and Senate leaders are forming a committee to review the state retirement system’s unfunded obligations of \$16.75 billion. The panel is charged with finding ways for the pension system to meet its obligations in years to come. The move comes three months after Republican S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley pledged to address the pension system’s unfunded obligations, adding the fix would “hurt.” S.C. House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, and Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, said Wednesday the bi-partisan committee — of six senators and six representatives — would begin meeting next month. Lucas noted thousands of South Carolinians contribute to the retirement system “with the hope of receiving a positive return in the future” and entrust the state with investing their money “wisely.” “We owe it to them (state employees) to honor our commitments,” Lucas said. “I’m confident we’ll roll up our sleeves, work together and make sure South Carolina honors its obligations in a fiscally responsible way,” Leatherman said.

#### **Walter Scott Case**

**Post and Courier:** Judge orders Walter Scott’s brain tissue transferred to lab for independent analysis

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160727/160729441/judge-orders-walter-scotts-brain-tissue-transferred-to-lab-for-independent-analysis>

Gregory Lee

An attorney representing Michael Slager, the former North Charleston police officer accused of murder in the fatal shooting of Walter Scott last year, has been granted a request to have Scott's brain matter transferred to a lab for independent analysis. Circuit Judge Clifton Newman on Wednesday ordered the Medical University of South Carolina to transfer the brain tissue to NMS Labs in Pennsylvania. MUSC must comply with the order within 10 days and send the tissue sample to the lab, according to court documents. The order also requires samples of the preservative solution used to keep the tissue and a control sample of that solution be sent. NMS Labs will perform two toxicology tests before returning remaining evidence to MUSC. Andy Savage, Slager's attorney, filed the motion March 8 asking for samples of Scott's hair and brain tissue, which were taken during an autopsy.

### **SC after Police Shootings:**

**The State:** Law enforcement fatalities by gunfire up nationwide; S.C. on par with previous year

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article92210032.html>

Cynthia Roldan

A mid-year report released Wednesday by a nonprofit that tracks officer fatalities nationwide found firearms-related deaths have increased by a whopping 78 percent when compared to the same time last year. The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund reported 32 officers nationwide have died so far of firearms-related fatal assaults through July 20. Of the 32 cases, 14 were "ambush-style attacks" carried out on unsuspecting officers, the report states. In 2015, the number of ambush attacks was three. South Carolina lost one officer to an ambush-style attack in 2016. Greenville police officer Allen Jacobs was involved in a foot chase of a gang member, when the suspect ducked around the corner of a house and sprayed Jacobs with bullets. South Carolina officials said that despite having one officer killed by gunfire in the line of duty so far, that doesn't mean there haven't been attempts on their lives.

**Greenville News:** Greenville County black leaders talk about police and race

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/local/2016/07/27/greenville-county-black-leaders-talk-police-and-race/87332750/>

Tim Smith

When U.S. Sen. Tim Scott took to the floor of the Senate recently to talk about his lifetime experiences with police because of his race, some Greenville County African-American leaders were nodding. State Rep. Leola Robinson-Simpson said family members have been stopped and made to lay on the ground because of their race. Greenville County Schools Trustee Ken Baxter said he watched as a boy when a man identifying himself as an undercover police officer used the N-word with his father and told him he could not cut through a city park. He said he will not drive at night out of fear of being stopped by police and a "mistake" being made. Scott of Charleston, the Senate's only black Republican, told the Senate that there is a "trust gap" between law enforcement and the black community after decades of suspect traffic stops and apparent racial profiling.

**Greenville News:** Prosecutors group to study process for handling police cases

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/2016/07/27/prosecutors-group-study-process-handling-police-cases/87616368/>

Tim Smith

A state prosecutors group agreed Wednesday to study whether there should be a standardized process to handle officer-involved shootings and criminal allegations against police that could give the public more confidence in the system. The decision comes as prosecutors nationwide are

wrestling with cases of police shootings and complaints of law enforcement misconduct and how best to handle them. The State Prosecution Coordination Commission voted unanimously to create a task force to study the issue, with the goal of developing recommendations by December, when lawmakers begin filing bills for the next legislative session. Solicitor Walt Wilkins of Greenville, vice chairman of the commission, told The Greenville News the eventual outcome could help prosecutors know when cases involving local police should be handled by another solicitor's office, what constitutes a conflict of interest for a prosecutor and what role a prosecutor should play in an investigation of an officer.

**The State:** Prosecutors: Let's study how others across U.S. investigate cop crimes

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article92115787.html>

Cynthia Roldan

South Carolina's solicitors have voted to create a task force to study how prosecutors nationwide investigate and prosecute cases in which a law enforcement officer is suspected of a crime. S.C. Commission on Prosecution Coordination chairman Duffie Stone said Wednesday prosecutors have been wanting to know the ways each of the state's solicitors and their counterparts nationwide investigate police-related crime. Ten members serve on the prosecution commission, a state agency which includes solicitors, lawmakers and law enforcement chiefs. The commission provides the Legislature and other solicitors with resources and it helps coordinate with other law enforcement agencies.

**The State:** Commission creates task force to study how prosecutors nationwide investigate cop crimes

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article92115787.html>

Cynthia Roldan

South Carolina's solicitors have voted to create a task force to study how prosecutors nationwide investigate and prosecute cases in which a law enforcement officer is suspected of a crime. South Carolina Commission on Prosecution Coordination Chairman Duffie Stone said Wednesday prosecutors have been discussing for a while wanting to know the ways each of the state's solicitors and prosecutors nationwide investigate police-related crime. The goal is to determine whether there should be a statewide uniform approach on investigating any case in which an officer is the suspect, not just officer-involved shootings. "I think that it's important for everybody to know what the process is more than just dealing with the individual cases," Stone said. Commission members agreed to create four task force subgroups to tackle whether legislators are filing bills or plan to submit legislation involving police and crime; the current process of how solicitors in South Carolina and nationwide investigate cases; potential conflicts and liability solicitors face when investigating cases in which a law enforcement officer is the suspect; and how prosecutors handle the cases.

**Local News:**

**Associated Press:** Greenville man charged with making bomb threats

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=bf2JzInX](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=bf2JzInX)

SC State Wire

A Social Security Administration office is expected to reopen a day after it was closed as a precaution following a bomb threat. The Greenville News reported (<http://grnol.co/2ad0r4z> ) Homeland Security officers were posted outside the city's Social Security office building Wednesday and informed visitors it was closed. Social Security spokeswoman Patti Patterson said the office closed out of an "abundance of caution," but was expected to reopen Thursday. Greenville police arrested 69-year-old

Ronnie Vaughn with making unlawful 911 emergency calls and making a bomb threat. Police spokesman Gilberto Franco says Vaughn was arrested at his home without incident. Arrest warrants say Vaughn called emergency dispatchers seven times on Tuesday and threatened to blow up two churches, a synagogue and the Social Security office.

**Associated Press:** Police: Man made bomb threats against Social Security office

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=cH2sKipS](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=cH2sKipS)

SC State Wire

Police have arrested a man they say made a bomb threat against the U.S. Social Security Administration office in Greenville. Local news organizations report that police arrested 69-year-old Ronnie Matthew Vaughn Wednesday on charges including bomb threat and unlawful use of 911. The Greenville Police Department says dispatchers received seven calls from a man making bomb threats to several locations including the Social Security office. The office was closed Wednesday as officials investigated. Authorities later said they did not detect any explosives in or near the building. After tracing the calls, police determined that Vaughn made the threats and arrested him without incident. It's unclear if Vaughn has an attorney.

**Associated Press :** Man gets prison for poaching nearly 1,000 Venus Flytraps

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=dXCnGYmP](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=dXCnGYmP)

SC State Wire

A North Carolina man will spend at least six months in prison after he removed nearly 1,000 Venus Flytrap plants from public game lands. Media outlets reported that a jury found 23-year-old Paul Simmons Jr. guilty. A judge sentenced him Tuesday to six months to 17 months in prison. Venus Flytraps only grow in wetlands in southeast North Carolina and northeast South Carolina. The carnivorous plants trap bugs to survive. They are protected, and poaching them was made a felony in North Carolina in December 2014. Prosecutors say Simmons was caught by a wildlife officer with 970 plants in his vehicle in January 2015 at the Holly Shelter Game Land in Hampstead. Two others with Simmons received probation, while a fourth defendant is awaiting trial.

**Associated Press:** Collision with bicyclist kills pregnant pedestrian and baby

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=BDK6UJ29](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=BDK6UJ29)

SC State Wire

Pickens County authorities say a 24-year-old pregnant woman and her baby died days after a bicyclist struck her. Coroner Kandy Kelley says Rose Higgins was pronounced dead at a hospital Tuesday afternoon. She was 26 weeks pregnant when a bicyclist hit her head-on about 10 p.m. Friday. Kelley says Higgins' daughter was delivered by C-section Saturday and died Monday. Local media outlets report Higgins was walking with her fiance to her grandmother's home in Six Mile when she was struck. Her fiance, 27-year-old Joshua McSwain, tells WYFF that Higgins hit her head on the asphalt. Authorities call the collision an accident and don't expect to file charges.

**Associated Press :** Body of elderly woman recovered from Charleston pond

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=v5mZVz8s](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=v5mZVz8s)

SC State Wire

Charleston police say the body of an elderly woman reported missing from an assisted living facility has been recovered from a nearby pond. Charleston County Deputy Coroner Sara Senn tells local media outlets that the body of 90-year-old Bonnie Walker was found in a small pond near the Brookdale Senior Living Center on Wednesday afternoon. Walker had been reported missing earlier in the day. The investigation is continuing and an autopsy has been scheduled to determine the

cause of death.

**The State:** Prison minister, family vouch for serial Columbia child molester's freedom

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article92122207.html>

John Monk

A volunteer prison minister told a Richland County jury Wednesday that convicted Columbia serial child molester Charles "Chuck" Sullivan helped sway convicts to Christianity while he was behind bars. "I'm a Christian. I believe everybody has the opportunity to do better and come to Christ," testified Gary Janelle, who told the jury he had known Sullivan for six years and that Sullivan's work with Catholic prisoners' groups helped convert inmates. Under questioning by Sullivan's attorney, James Falk, Janelle told how Sullivan's personal guidance on how to help prisoners, as well as his knowledge of computers to produce Christian texts, "added a lot to the Catholic ministry at Allendale prison." In prison, with its mix of "Rastafarians and Wiccans and devil worshippers, ... telling the Christian story of God is so important, and Charles was able to do that, and it made a difference," Janelle said. Assistant S.C. Attorney General Cam Morrow was not persuaded.

**The Herald:** Duracell to close Lancaster plant; 430 jobs at risk

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/article92198787.html>

David Thackham

The Lancaster Duracell plant will shut its doors over the next three years, the company said Wednesday, putting most of its 430 employees out of work. Just two years after the Lancaster County Council approved an agreement to cut Duracell's property taxes for the next three decades, Duracell announced Wednesday the plant will reduce production slowly before shutting down in mid-2019. Lancaster County Administrator Steve Willis said the county was working with the local plant as recently as November to provide tax incentives for machinery upgrades. "I heard it was coming down from corporate, that the decision was made there," Willis said. "It definitely wasn't anything with the local support or the local employees." The plant, which has produced AA batteries for more than 35 years, is the seventh-largest employer in the county. The shutdown will begin in stages in March, the company said.

**Sun News:** New Golden Mile parking rules: \$80K startup costs, \$50K revenue in first year

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/local/article92183327.html>

Chloe Johnson

The nonprofit group that receives money from paid parking in Myrtle Beach will face a first-year shortfall of roughly \$35,000 as it enforces new rules along the Golden Mile. Revenue from paid parking across the city goes to the Downtown Redevelopment Corp., a nonprofit 501(c)3 created by the city that is aimed at rehabilitating the downtown area. The DRC will now receive money for spots in beach access lots along the Golden Mile, which were, until recently, some of the few remaining areas in which beachgoers could park for free. Those spots now cost \$2 an hour or \$10 a day. Along the Golden Mile, DRC projects that the new parking rules will create \$50,261 in revenue through December, including money from parking tickets, which goes directly to the city, not DRC.

**Associated Press:** Park gives visitors chance to see rare spider lilies

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=2mJdCehs](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=2mJdCehs)

SC State Wire

Richland County officials are giving visitors to a riverfront park a chance to see rare spider lilies without harming the plants. The Richland County Conservation Commission is showing off new signs and a binocular viewer Thursday at Riverfront Park in Columbia. The signs will give information about

the lilies, which can be found at the park and only about 50 other locations in the world. The plants grow best in shallow, fast-moving water found on the rocky edges of small islands in the Broad and Saluda rivers. The signs also advise park visitors to not to pick the rare flowers.

## **National News:**

**Associated Press:** N. Korea: US has crossed red line, relations on war footing

<http://bigstory.ap.org/0e800caf59dc419f873f2945442e6f1a>

Eric Talmadge

North Korea's top diplomat for U.S. affairs told The Associated Press on Thursday that Washington "crossed the red line" and effectively declared war by putting leader Kim Jong Un on its list of sanctioned individuals, and said a vicious showdown could erupt if the U.S. and South Korea hold annual war games as planned next month. Han Song Ryol, director-general of the U.S. affairs department at the North's Foreign Ministry, said in an interview that recent U.S. actions have put the situation on the Korean Peninsula on a war footing. The United States and South Korea regularly conduct joint military exercises south of the Demilitarized Zone, and Pyongyang typically responds to them with tough talk and threats of retaliation. Han said North Korea believes the nature of the maneuvers has become openly aggressive because they reportedly now include training designed to prepare troops for the invasion of the North's capital and "decapitation strikes" aimed at killing its top leadership.

**Associated Press:** Reagan shooter Hinckley will soon leave hospital for good

<http://bigstory.ap.org/cb510d7f457648eba28bdacdab82287d>

Ben Finley and Ben Nuckols

In little more than a week, the only living man to have shot an American president could pack his bags and leave a Washington psychiatric hospital for the last time. John Hinckley Jr. has already been living with his 90-year-old mother at her home overlooking a golf course in Williamsburg, Virginia, for 17 days each month. Thanks to a judge's order Wednesday, he'll be able to live there full time, starting as early as Aug. 5. Hinckley was 25 and had suffered from psychosis and depression for several years when he shot President Ronald Reagan and three others outside a Washington hotel on March 30, 1981. He was found not guilty by reason of insanity and committed to St. Elizabeths hospital. Now 61, Hinckley has graying hair and suffers from arthritis and high blood pressure. He enjoys painting and photography and cares for feral cats. During his time in Williamsburg, he drives himself around town in a Toyota Avalon, going to movies and eating at fast-food restaurants.

**Associated Press:** Individuals, agencies dodge blame as Freddie Gray case ends

<http://bigstory.ap.org/88848b1be5674fcb8beed19971bfd71d>

Juliet Linderman

Fourteen months after the death of a black man whose neck was broken in a police van prompted massive protests, spawned rioting and toppled the careers of Baltimore's police commissioner and a Democratic mayor poised for re-election, no one will go to jail for the death. The city's top prosecutor was righteous in her rage Wednesday as she stood behind a lectern perched at the intersection where Freddie Gray was arrested in April 2015. Earlier in the day, Baltimore State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby had dropped the cases against the rest of the six police officers charged in Gray's death after prosecutors had suffered blow after crippling blow as a judge acquitted three others in rapid succession. Instead of conceding defeat, she blasted the police department for a biased investigation she blamed for failing to secure a single conviction.

## World News:

**Associated Press:** French ID second church attacker; warning 4 days earlier

<http://bigstory.ap.org/f3dbc2f65ffb43b086f3490164dc5d8b>

Lori Hinnant and Elaine Ganley

Officials on Thursday identified the second man who attacked a Normandy church during a morning Mass this week, saying he is a 19-year-old from eastern France who was spotted last month in Turkey as he supposedly headed to Syria — but who returned to France instead. The prosecutor's office identified him as Abdel-Malik Nabil Petitjean following DNA tests. A security official confirmed that he was the unidentified man pictured on a photo distributed to police four days earlier with a warning that he could be planning an attack. Petitjean and another 19-year-old, Adel Kermiche, were killed by police as they left the church Tuesday in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray after having fatally slashed the throat of the elderly priest. An elderly man among the five people in the congregation was also seriously wounded. The attack was claimed by the Islamic State group, which released a video Wednesday allegedly showing Kermiche and his accomplice clasping hands and pledging allegiance to the group.

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