

Title: **Rule changes target painkiller addiction in SC**
 Author: By SEANNA ADCOX The Associated Press
 Size: 25.88 square inch
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Rule changes target painkiller addiction in SC

By SEANNA ADCOX

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Most doctors in South Carolina will soon be required to consult a statewide database of patients' medical history as a way to combat the state's rampant prescription painkiller problem.

The changes will direct any doctor who wants to bill either Medicaid or the state health plan to use the database that's been voluntary since 2008, said Christian Soura, director of the state's Department of Health and Human Services.

Announcements will likely go out in February on the mandate, which starts April 1, he said.

The S.C. Medical Association supports the change, but "there will be some doctors unhappy about yet another step thrown into the mix," said its CEO, state Rep. Todd Atwater.

"Some say it will slow me down another minute and a

half I don't have, but really?" said Atwater, R-Lexington. "Sometimes you have to have a little inconvenience to do the right thing and get some of these opioids off the streets."

The mandate will come three years after Inspector General Patrick Maley recommended it in a report, describing high-prescribers as either motivated by money or naively helping "doctor shoppers." In response to his report, Gov. Nikki Haley created the Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Council, which similarly concluded one year ago that mandating the database's use is key to combatting abuse of OxyContin, Percocet and other opioids.

Similar mandates enacted in New York and Tennessee in 2012 resulted in drops of 75 percent and 36 percent, respectively, a year later in patients seeing multiple

doctors for the same drugs, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2014 Vital Signs report.

That report ranked South Carolina 11th highest nationwide in prescribing painkillers, with 102 prescriptions written for every 100 people.

"When you look at the impact of other states with similar policies, it's harder to say, 'I don't want to spend another minute or two in front of the computer,'" Soura said of doctors' decreasing resistance.

A law passed in June 2014 required pharmacists to report daily on the controlled substances they sell, to ensure the database is regularly updated. But a clause specified that doctors and pharmacists don't have to actually consult it before prescribing or dispensing medicine.

Title: **Offshoresupport remainsfirm**

Author:

Size: 10.07 square inch

Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



Offshore support remains firm

I want to thank Gov. Nikki Haley for standing firm in her support for responsible offshore energy exploration in the face of the environmentalist groups that showed up at the statehouse to demand she change her mind.

These groups, including the S.C. Small Business Chamber of Commerce and their CEO, Frank Knapp Jr, who is also a progressive radio talk show host, are leading a campaign to try and deny South Carolina the economic benefits that could come with responsible off-shore energy exploration.

They act as though nobody on the coast of S.C. wants responsible energy exploration when in fact a recent poll conducted by Benchmark Research shows 64 percent support statewide and 58 percent support in the coastal congressional districts. Governor Haley and the voters of S.C. rightfully support these efforts; don't be fooled by the misinformation from these environmental groups. They are the same people that are holding up the construction of International Drive and I-73.

- Bill Crowther, Murrells Inlet

Title: **S.C. Democrat fights abortion ban with proposal to limit prescription Viagra**
 Author: BY CASSIE COPE ccope@thestate.com
 Size: 107.10 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



S.C. Democrat fights abortion ban with proposal to limit prescription Viagra

State Rep. Mia McLeod files bill adding obstacles to obtain erectile dysfunction medication

Proposed limits intended to combat attempts to restrict abortion at 20 weeks

'Entertaining' bill will go nowhere, Republican leader says

BY CASSIE COPE
ccope@thestate.com

A Democratic lawmaker from Richland County acknowledges her proposal to make it more difficult to get medication to treat erectile dysfunction likely will go nowhere. But state Rep. Mia McLeod says she wants to send a message to the GOP-controlled General Assembly about legislating about the bodies of South Carolinians.

McLeod said her bill — one of most controversial introduced before the session starts in 10 days — is her way of fighting proposals that would restrict abortions in the state.

"It's not a joke," she said.

A top House Republican sees little humor in McLeod's bill.

House Majority Leader Bruce Bannister, R-Greenville, compared her proposal to a political cartoon — "Entertaining, but kind of sad

that someone would spend the time to draft and introduce that bill."

McLeod's proposal won't stop GOP-led efforts to limit abortions, including a ban 20 weeks into a pregnancy that is close to final passage.

"The caucus is going to support some pro-life legislation as we have done in the past," Bannister said.

McLeod knows her bill to limit erectile dysfunction medication — including Viagra and Cialis, part of a \$4 billion-a-year worldwide industry — is a long shot.

"In a male-dominated Legislature is it likely to pass?" McLeod asked. "No."

But she added her bill, along with anti-abortion proposals, waste lawmakers' time, energy and taxpayer money.

McLeod has mentioned her conversation-creating bill in fundraising pitches for her 2016 state Senate

campaign. She proposes that doctors must clear several hurdles before prescribing

erectile dysfunction medication, including:

- Referring a patient to a sex therapist
- Conducting a cardiac stress test
- Notifying the patient of the drug risks
- Obtaining a notarized affidavit from at least one of the patient's sexual partners that states the patient has experienced symptoms of erectile dysfunction during the previous 90 days

McLeod said her experience on a special House panel that investigated the state's two Planned Parenthood clinics this fall fueled her to file her erectile dysfunction bill.

The panel found the S.C. clinics were not involved in donor tissue programs, a source of national political

controversy this year, McLeod said.

The committee has not finished working, said state Rep. Gary Clary, a Pickens Republican who chairs the panel. But the investigation found, so far, that no state money is being spent to fund Planned Parenthood.

Another panel of three senators and three state representatives will begin working out the differences on a proposal to prohibit abortions at 20 weeks — instead of the current 24 weeks — soon after legislators return Jan. 12.

Lawmakers on the committee are working out possible exemptions for rape and incest and the definition of fetal anomaly, said state Sen. Brad Hutto, an Orangeburg Democrat who sits on the panel.

Once a deal is reached, lawmakers will vote again

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on the bill. If approved, the ban would head to Republican Gov. Nikki Haley's desk for her signature to become law.

Even if a 20-week ban passes, McLeod expects attempts to restrict abortion to continue.

"I don't see an end in sight," she said. "That's troubling to say the least."

McLeod's proposal highlights how some lawmakers advocate for keeping the government out of people's lives — except when it comes to restrictions for women, Hutto said.

Women's health decisions should be left up to the woman, her doctor and her faith, Hutto said.

By proposing to restrict

access to erectile dysfunction medication, McLeod said she wants legislators to think about abortion differently and broaden discussions to include men's sexual health.

If some lawmakers are going to insist upon regulating some issues over reproductive rights, then McLeod

said, "We should govern it all."

Cassie Cope: 803-771-8657, @cassielcope

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IT'S NOT A JOKE.

State Rep. Mia McLeod

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Pre-filed bills

A GLANCE AT SOME PROPOSALS THAT S.C. LAWMAKERS WILL CONSIDER DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION THAT BEGINS JAN. 12:

A DAM FUND

S.C. Rep. Jimmy Bales, D-Richland, is proposing to spend \$25 million to establish a fund that would provide loans to dam owners.

The money, issued through the state Department of Health and Environmental Control, would be used to repair or replace dams that have public access roads on them or are on a body of water that allows public access.

Many homeowners associations don't have the money to repair dams that failed in October's flooding, Bales said. If a dam is owned by a homeowners association, its board of directors would apply for the loan and pledge its dues as collateral.

All loans would have to be paid back over 15 years or less at an interest rate set by the state treasurer.

Bales added repairing the dams and restoring the lakes would help keep local tax bases up.

LAKE NOISE PROHIBITION

State Sen. Ronnie Cromer, R-Newberry, who lives on Lake Murray, wants to address complaints of noise from boats and businesses on the lake.

Since Newberry, Saluda and Richland counties all touch the lake, noise restrictions vary in each county.

In addition, a sheriff in one county doesn't have jurisdiction across the border, Cromer said.

Cromer is suggesting DHEC regulate noise violations.

MORE MONEY FOR AIRPORTS

State Sen. Paul Campbell, R-Berkeley, introduced a proposal that could send some property tax paid on airlines' aircraft to aid smaller airports across the state.

Campbell, executive director of the Charleston County Aviation Authority, suggests the State Aviation Fund receive aircraft property tax money after the first \$2.5 million is collected.

The aviation fund is not receiving any of the property tax money because the state does not collect enough taxes to meet the current \$5 million annual threshold. The State Aviation Fund revenue is used for airfield maintenance, weather reporting and matching of federal construction grants.

Smaller general aviation airports in South Carolina are prioritized for the money because they don't have the revenue streams of the state's four largest airports in Charleston, Columbia, Myrtle Beach and Greenville/Spartanburg, said James Stephens, executive director of S.C. Aeronautics Commission.

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Mia McLeod

Title: **Repairing dams, recovering from the flood will dominate 2016**
 Author:
 Size: 22.94 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Repairing dams, recovering from the flood will dominate 2016

It will be quite some time before many people repair their lives after October's devastating rainfall and floods.

For state and local governments, repairing dams and roads, especially, will be an ongoing priority.

South Carolina can expect continued efforts to tighten the state's dam safety laws and provide money for more inspectors after the failure of more than three dozen state-regulated dams.

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control says it wants to double the size of its dam safety staff, with \$595,000 in extra funding for fiscal year 2016-2017. At the same time, House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-

Darlington, has filed legislation to toughen dam safety laws, which could swell the DHEC funding request to more than \$1 million.

DHEC and the state have been heavily criticized by those who say better oversight of dams could have helped prevent some failures that flooded property and took lives downstream. Lawsuits already have been filed by downstream property owners against upstream dam owners. Studies analyzing what caused the failures should be forthcoming in 2016.

Meanwhile, it will take an estimated \$100 million to rebuild the flood-damaged Columbia Canal, the city's primary water source for the downtown

treatment plant that supplies water to about 188,000 customers. FEMA might pay 75 percent of that.

Another huge cost will be repairing S.C. roads and bridges. That will cost \$137 million, with the state paying \$49 million.

Statewide, flood losses are pushing \$1.5 billion, including \$587 million in agricultural losses, \$181 million in insurance claims and \$35 million in tourism losses. The floods will cost the state an estimated \$114 million, according to Gov. Nikki Haley, with the federal government paying an additional \$493 million.

— SAMMY FRETWELL, CLIF LEBLANC

Title: **Will lawmakers fix our roads?**
Author:
Size: 53.94 square inch
Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



MAKING SC STRONGER

Will lawmakers fix our roads?

South Carolina lawmakers, who will return this month to Columbia, must decide whether to send more money to the state Transportation Department to repair the state's crumbling roads and bridges.

Early on, senators must decide whether to approve a proposal to increase the state gas tax and other driving fees to create a recurring revenue stream for road repairs.

Senators must agree on how much to increase taxes, wheth-

er to use state surpluses on roads and whether to pass an income tax cut, a priority of Gov. Nikki Haley, who could veto any proposal that she does not like.

In addition, many lawmakers argue the structure of the Transportation Department must be changed, giving the governor control, before any more money is sent to the roads agency.

If senators reach an agreement, their proposal must go back to the S.C. House, which

last year passed a 10-cent-a-gallon increase to the gas tax and raised the sales tax cap on vehicles from \$300 to \$500.

October's flooding, which knocked out 541 roads at one point, highlighted the poor condition of the state's roads, estimated to cost \$30 billion to fix over the next 30 years. But opponents of a tax hike say a \$1.2 billion budget surplus means the state can afford to repair roads without raising taxes.

— CASSIE COPE



TRACY GLANTZ tgiantz@thestate.com

Garners Ferry Road was one of the trouble spots following flooding in the Gills Creek watershed.

Title: **Enoughwiththe secrecyabout economic development**
 Author: By TheHerald Editorial Board
 Size: 55.8 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



OUR VIEW

Enough with the secrecy about economic development

By The Herald Editorial Board

Large-scale job creation is certainly welcomed news for this region, not only because a new company intends to bring as many as 1,400 new jobs to Chester County, but the anticipated ripple effect support industries and product suppliers will feel as well.

But when the Chester County Council approved tax incentives for a \$1.6 billion manufacturing facility last week, they kept the developers and name of the company that will benefit from that publicly-funded inducement a secret.

The council, without discussion, approved tax breaks for "Project 1429" without identifying the company or saying where the plant will be built. Those details will be made public by the company at a February or March groundbreaking ceremony that will likely be attended by Gov. Nikki Haley.

In other words, after everything is already signed, sealed and delivered, we'll let county residents in on the secret. Trust us.

During public hearings on the tax incentives, the only available information was the potential scope of the investment and that it will be a cellulosic renewable diesel facility.

South Carolina statutes allow Chester County officials the leeway to approve such mystery projects.

The law states that economic development records may be sheltered from disclosure until a project has been publicly announced or an incentive agreement has been finalized – "whichever occurs later."

To be sure, Chester County is not alone in this approach. Secrecy has become common practice among economic development agencies across the state – with very few projects coming to light until after the governor gets to unveil (and take credit for) the successful recruitment of more jobs in an event that more often resembles a political rally than a public policy announcement.

But why *should* public officials proceed in this

secretive manner, especially on a project that doesn't appear to be competitive or at risk of choosing an alternative site?

Common Cause South Carolina – a nonpartisan group that promotes open and accountable government – offered a reasonable middle ground here: The state Department of Commerce should institute a public checklist to release information on tax breaks, land grants or other incentives before projects are approved.

There is much more than a theoretical argument about the importance of open government at stake here. Chester County residents should have every opportunity to learn about the manufacturing history and core business practices of a large industrial facility locating in their community. Simply because the facility will be engaged in bio-fuel production doesn't mean there are no potential hazards in its operation and the distribution of that fuel.

Without knowing the identity of the company, how can residents look into its history and find out whether it has prior incidents involving chemical accidents, hazardous materials violations, pollution complaints or workplace accidents?

All in good time, Chester officials would say.

County attorney Joan Winters said once the project becomes public, there would be opportunities for public comment, such as during the state Department of Health and Environmental Control's permitting process. But the project isn't even on DHEC's radar yet – state officials have not received an application for Project 1429.

With local officials already anticipating groundbreaking ceremonies with the unknown company – hoping the governor will be on hand to help turn a shovel or two of dirt – standing in front of this moving train would be difficult should any issues involving the company come to light after its identity is ultimately discovered.

No one would begrudge Chester County officials

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or the governor's office for wanting to tout an economic achievement of this magnitude, but this stealth approach to the required public approval process is unnecessary and unwise.

We earnestly disagree with County Administrator Shane Stuart, who said after the incentive vote last week that keeping the company's name confidential was in the best interest of Chester County residents.

It is never in the best interest of the public to be kept in the dark concerning important public policy matters. The acceptance of an industrial facility that will impact the environment, utilities, roadway infrastructure and other quality of life components in Chester County should come with residents' having an opportunity to voice informed concerns based on good-faith communication and disclosure about its owners.

Title: **New state law might enable more help for flood victims**
 Author: By SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
 Size: 40.92 square inch
 Greenwood, SC Circulation: 16494



New state law might enable more help for flood victims

By SEANNA ADCOX

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — A new law written to assist Habitat for Humanity's home-building mission might be a boon in South Carolina's post-flood rebuilding efforts. they passed the exemption overwhelmingly in June, legislators could not have foreseen the benefit to a state ravaged by historic flooding months later.

The law that took effect New Year's Day allows charities that build or renovate homes for needy families to

buy those construction materials free of sales tax. When

See **FLOOD**, page 4A

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FLOOD

Continued from 1A

make sense to tax the work of a charity that seeks to build homes and hope in communities.

“Obviously, we had no idea anything like that would happen,” Smith, R-Simpsonville, said of the October storm. “If it does provide some benefit to people who have lost their homes, that’s great. Every little bit does help.”

Greg Thomas, director of the state’s association for 36 Habitat affiliates, called the law’s timing “an absolute blessing.”

While the state sales tax is 6 percent, local taxes push it to at least 7 percent in most counties.

Eliminating that cost on construction materials will save Habitat between \$2,500 and \$4,000 for each home built. Ordinarily, Habitat affiliates build roughly 100 homes and repair another 100 annually statewide, Thomas said.

“That’s extra that could be used for additional repairs on other homes, particularly in this flood period and disaster-response time,” he said.

It’s unclear how much the law could help flood victims. Other charities didn’t know about the exemption when contacted by the Associated Press, though they were eager

to learn more.

“No one is talking it up yet,” Thomas said.

How the exemption applies might help explain that. The law defines needy as individuals or families making up to 80 percent of their county’s median income. In hard-hit Richland County, for example, household income needs to be less than \$39,000; in Charleston County, less than \$41,000; in Clarendon County, less than \$21,200, according to Census data.

“It’s almost poverty-level folks, so if you’re a middle-income family with damage, those homes aren’t eligible,” Thomas said.

For Habitat-built homes, determining eligibility isn’t an issue. Since the charity acts as the mortgage company, the family’s financials are reviewed before approval. But it’s an uncomfortable question for post-flood work, which often involves mold remediation and new flooring, insulation, and drywall, Thomas said.

“Without having a charitable organization ask, ‘How much money do you make?’ you have to go on the value of the home and make assumptions,” he said.

Flood victims in the 24 counties covered by October’s emergency declaration have until Monday to register with the Federal Emergency Man-

agement Agency for federal assistance. But that aid is limited.

As of Dec. 27, FEMA had inspected nearly 81,300 structures for damage, resulting in \$78 million in approved aid for 26,108 applicants. That’s an average of less than \$3,000 per family. The maximum grant a family can receive is \$33,000, according to the agency.

The One SC relief fund, which Gov. Nikki Haley launched in November, awarded \$500,000 to 13 charities in its initial round of grants announced Dec. 21, with each receiving between \$25,000 and \$150,000. Those charities, including two Habitat affiliates, are providing an additional \$2.5 million total from other sources to rebuild or remove mold from about 350 homes, said JoAnn Turnquist, president of Central Carolina Community Foundation, which is housing the fund.

The nonprofit is not releasing how much more money has been raised, though Turnquist says people continue to donate. Charities have until Friday to apply for a second-round grant.

“We’re hopeful the fund will continue as long as it’s needed,” she said. “We’ve been told to prepare for a two-to-three-year recovery period.”

Title: **SC message to world: No more plutonium**

Author:

Size: 26.97 square inch

Beaufort, SC Circulation: 11269



SC message to world: No more plutonium

Federal government must clean up the existing problem at the Savannah River Site.

Here we go again. The federal government wants South Carolina to be the dumping ground for more of the world's plutonium, a toxic nuclear weapons component.

At the same time, it is failing miserably in its promise to process and remove 12 metric tons of plutonium already at the Savannah River Site near Aiken.

South Carolina should fight with every tool it has to stop a new plan by the U.S. Department Energy to import nearly a ton of plutonium from the Pacific Rim and North America to SRS.

Not an ounce more should arrive until the existing problem is resolved.

The news of new shipments is part of an old shell game. In it, the federal government tries to move bad things around because it has enacted no national plan. And it repeatedly fails to live up to its promises and responsibilities to communities around the country.

Gov. Nikki Haley said a lawsuit against the federal government may be needed. Good for her. But that tactic — like

a previous governor's threat to lie down in the road to stop plutonium shipments, as well as previous lawsuits, and laws threatening steep fines against the federal government — has not yet resolved this national problem.

That's why it would be foolish to trust a new Energy Department proposal to ship about six metric tons of plutonium now at SRS to an existing DOE disposal site in New Mexico.

That would be great, if it could be believed. The proposal faces numerous hurdles, including funding and opposition in New Mexico.

Meanwhile, the government's program to convert weapons-grade plutonium at SRS into a mixed oxide fuel (MOX) that could be used in commercial nuclear reactors is years behind schedule and billions of dollars over budget.

So into this quagmire stumbles the federal government with the suggestion to do what? Bring in more plutonium. It's like the theater of the absurd. But it is a serious problem that has been bungled for many decades.

South Carolina has done more than its share to be a patriotic good neighbor to the nation's nuclear program. Enough is enough.

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The law that took effect New Year's Day allows charities that build or renovate homes for needy families to buy those construction materials free of sales tax. When they passed the exemption overwhelmingly in June, legislators could not have foreseen the benefit to a state ravaged by historic flooding months later.

The measure's main sponsor, Rep. Garry Smith, said he introduced it because it didn't make

LAW

Continued from 3A

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Please see LAW on 4A

MORE INSIDE

A look at flood-related benefits for those who couldn't work. 4A

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RESIDENTS RECEIVE \$1.2 MILLION IN FLOOD-RELATED JOBLESS BENEFITS

COLUMBIA — South Carolinians who were unable to work amid the October flooding disaster have received more than \$1.2 million in unemployment benefits.

The (Columbia) State newspaper reports that more than 2,100 people received flood-related jobless benefits. According to the state Department of Employment and Workforce, nearly 6,100 people had applied after the Oct. 2-5 storm that closed roads and businesses.

Business owners, employees and the self-employed could receive benefits if they could prove they lost income because of the disaster.

Agency spokesman Bob Bouyea says some applicants were determined ineligible because they left their jobs before the flood or their employers had previously scheduled a shutdown during that period.

Bouyea says most applicants sought a week or two of benefits.

The most claims by far came from hard-hit Richland County.



Title: Upgrade dam program
Author:
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Beaufort, SC Circulation: 11269



Upgrade dam program

At an additional cost of \$1.8 million per year, it is difficult to envision a rationale for South Carolina to not improve its dam safety program in the wake of last fall's torrential rains that caused nearly three dozen dams to fail.

A bill presented by South Carolina Speaker of the House Jay Lucas would nearly quadruple the budget for the program that's administered by the state Department of Health and Environmental Control, according to a report by The State newspaper. The department's current budget is about \$470,000, and it is woefully inadequate.

It is hard to imagine that this legislation would not get the support it deserves. The total cost to recover from the October deluge exceeds \$1 billion. Certainly only a fraction of that would have been prevented had the dams been inspected more routinely, but it seems worth the relatively small cost to make the dams safer. ...

Once Lucas' bill is passed, the Legislature and the governor need to follow through with funding.

A spokeswoman for Gov. Nikki Haley acknowledged after the flood that there's a



THE 1,000-YEAR RAIN MIGHT HAVE BEEN A FREAK OCCURRENCE, BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN THE STATE SHOULDN'T BE PREPARED FOR THE NEXT SIGNIFICANT RAINFALL.

funding gap in the agency and said that there would likely be more money for the program in the executive budget. That needs to happen.

The reality is, South Carolina gets heavy rains throughout the year. The 1,000-year rain might have been a freak occurrence, but it doesn't mean the state shouldn't be prepared for the next significant rainfall. Ensuring the state's dams are properly inspected, and that more of them are inspected, is simply common sense

- Greenville News