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Governor Nikki Haley News:

Post and Courier: 10 key players in the debate over gun reform

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160130/PC16/160139940>

In the wake of the mass shooting at Emanuel AME Church, dozen of bills have been introduced to both restrict and expand laws related to buying and carrying firearms in South Carolina.

Gov. Haley says existing gun regulations are sufficient: Gov. Nikki Haley attended all of the funerals for the nine worshippers killed in the Charleston Emanuel AME Church shooting last summer. But going forward, she has said nothing about the need for new gun laws in South Carolina.

Note: “The gun wasn’t to blame at the end of the day, it was the hate,” Haley said of the tragedy. “Let’s dig deeper. The easy part is to throw it after the gun. The harder part is to go to the heart of why people did it in the first place.”

Note: “How do you go through nine funerals and sit there and find out the FBI didn’t do their job?” Haley said. “There’s no new law we need for that. They should’ve just done their job.”

The State: Environmental programs suffer as DHEC scrambles for funds

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article57516018.html>

Sammy Fretwell

Sputtering air monitors, leaking underground storage tanks, acid-draining mines and poorly regulated dams are among the problems that state environmental officials say they must address after years of financial neglect.

Note: Gov. Nikki Haley doesn’t think DHEC needs \$35 million in extra money next year, but she did include nearly \$18 million in new funding for the agency in her executive budget recently, records show.

Note: Her office said that as with any budget, the governor must make decisions based on priorities.

However, Haley recommended funding the agency’s top priorities, including improvement in the dam safety program, the governor’s office said.

Note: The increase would allow DHEC to hire 16 additional staffers to bolster its existing staff of 23. Haley has proposed \$201,250, which the agency says would allow DHEC to hire three additional staff members.

Note: The agency asked for \$464,000 to help fix or replace aging monitoring equipment. That equipment is increasingly prone to errors that can provide inaccurate air pollution readings, Heigel said. Haley did not propose money for air quality monitoring, according to a budget sheet provided by DHEC to the House Ways and Means Committee.

WCSC: Gov. Nikki Haley receives Maritime Association award

<http://www.live5news.com/story/31095798/governor-receives-award>

Gov. Nikki Haley was in the Holy City on Friday at the Maritime Association Meeting in the Charleston Area Convention Center. The governor was there to receive the association’s Christopher Gadsden Award for her strong and continual support of the palmetto state’s maritime economy.

Note: “I am honored to represent you. I’m honored to represent a state that truly has the quality and the heart to keep going,” Haley said.

Anderson Independent: New buildings on Tri-County, Clemson wish lists

<http://www.independentmail.com/news/new-buildings-on-tri-county-clemson-wish-lists-2a7e7c7a-2f0e-5fdd-e053-0100007ff40d-367108191.html>

Mike Eads

Clemson University and Tri-County Technical College will ask state legislators this week for extra money to fund some priorities in their upcoming budgets, starting a process that won’t end until the state’s new budget is set in late June. Clemson President Jim Clements will lead his university’s presentation to the House Ways and Means Committee’s Higher Education and Technical Schools Budget Subcommittee.

Note: At least two Upstate senators think higher education will get a sympathetic reception in this year's session, despite Gov. Nikki Haley's complaint in her State of the State address about tuition rates going up at the state's universities in recent years.

Sun News: Volunteers to rebuild Conway home destroyed by October flood

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/local/article57422928.html>

Angela Nicholas

A Conway family that lost their home during October's historic statewide flood will get a new one in February thanks to a local mission group and a grant from the One SC Flood Relief Fund. Built in 1919, the house where 51-year-old S.C. DOT trade specialist Archie Simmons lived with his disabled mother and sister was razed recently to make room for new construction.

Note: Four feet of water saturated the house for more than two weeks during the record storm that killed 17 people and prompted Gov. Nikki Haley to declare a state of emergency. Irreparable damage left the Simmons family homeless.

S.C. General Assembly News:

The State: The Buzz: Who is running for S.C. Legislature seats?

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article57470878.html>

Cassie Cope

South Carolina is two months from the March 30 filing deadline for candidates who will seek their party's nomination for state House and Senate seats. Filing activity is being watched closely at the State House, where legislators face potentially opposition-drawing votes.

Post and Courier: Legislature faces more than 50 bills that have been filed as they look to close the 'Charleston loophole'

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160130/PC16/160139931>

Cynthia Roldan, Doug Pardue

A fight over gun control is underway in the state's capitol as legislators struggle over what, if anything, to do in response to the shooting deaths of nine people at Charleston's Emanuel AME Church. Until the Emanuel shooting, most of the state's Democrats viewed tighter gun control as a losing battle in the Republican-controlled Legislature.

Spartanburg Herald Journal: Educators object to letting teachers carry guns

Bill would let designated employees carry weapons on campus

<http://www.goupstate.com/article/20160130/articles/160139982>

Zach Fox

Several Spartanburg County education officials are speaking out against a bill that would allow some teachers and administrators to carry guns on campus. The "School Protection Officer Act," which was proposed by Rep. Phillip Lowe of Florence, would allow school districts and public colleges and universities to designate some employees as school protection officers.

Greenville News: Sen. Mike Fair announces re-election bid for District 6

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/2016/01/30/sen-mike-fair-announces-re-election-bid-district-6/79586910/>

Tim Smith

Sen. Mike Fair of Greenville, a Republican who has represented Senate District 6 since 1995, is running for another term, saying "there is more work to be done." The 69-year-old chairman of the Senate Corrections and Penology Committee, had previously confirmed he would be seeking re-election but made his announcement Saturday to The Greenville News.

Florence Morning News: Pee Dee lawmakers: "School district consolidation a viable solution"

http://www.scnow.com/news/local/article_f2b444f0-c7ab-11e5-8335-07ed80956eb7.html

Joshua Lloyd

As South Carolina lawmakers explore options to remedy the state's notoriously shoddy K-12 education system, a solution suggested by some local lawmakers is a consolidation of school districts within Florence County. Florence School District Four –the Timmonsville public school system -- has a history of well-below-average test scores, and state Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman recently gave the district a warning that it could be stripped of its ability to give high school diplomas.

S.C. Political News:

The State: How Trump is defying logic to lead in SC

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article57498843.html>

Andrew Shain

The Donald Trump show is working in South Carolina. Fueled by his feisty personality and stoked by voter anger over politics as usual, the New York billionaire has led S.C. presidential polls for six months. Most political experts in the early-primary state did not think Trump's lead would last six weeks.

The Hill: SC lawmaker to endorse Cruz: report

<http://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/gop-primaries/267626-sc-lawmaker-to-endorse-cruz-report>

Bradford Richardson

Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.) is expected to back Republican Ted Cruz for president, a source with knowledge of the situation told The State. The endorsement will come when Cruz makes a campaign stop in the South Carolina lawmaker's home district Tuesday, a day after the Iowa caucuses, according to the report.

Opinion / Editorial Roundup:

Spartanburg Herald Journal: Poor districts need state's help now

<http://www.goupstate.com/article/20160131/opinion/160139997>

Editorial

Through the early stages of the 2016 legislative session, our state's deteriorating roads and bridges have been thrust to the forefront, and rightfully so. But the state's lawmakers need to take significant action on another road crisis of sorts this session: the notorious "Corridor of Shame."

Times and Democrat: The down side of unfolding plan for road repairs

http://thetandd.com/news/the-down-side-of-unfolding-plan-for-road-repairs/article_6d383a00-8d26-5695-9559-5140e6c708ed.html

Editorial

On the surface, South Carolina residents should be happy with the course of the debate in Columbia about fixing the state's roads. Gov. Nikki Haley is pushing a plan to spend \$345 million in fiscal 2016-17 on repairing infrastructure, with a key component of funding being a 10-cent increase in the state's gasoline tax of 16.75 cents a gallon.

Bluffton Today: State of the State: More, less or better

<http://www.blufftontoday.com/bluffton-opinion/2016-01-31/state-state-more-less-or-better#.Vq4TcPkrLIU>

Phil Noble

"This has been a different, and difficult year for South Carolina; a year that warrants a different kind of speech," Gov. Nikki Haley said in her recent State of the State address. And indeed there were some differences in the speech. She introduced people who were part of our recent tragedies of the Emanuel shooting and the floods.

Times and Democrat: Certificate of need: System does not need scrapping

http://thetandd.com/news/certificate-of-need-system-does-not-need-scrapping/article_ec7c1a04-f559-5370-b70e-1f538f9ddb64.html

Editorial

With the need to fix state roads and reduce the inequity in public education, the Legislature may have too much on its agenda to get around to streamlining the certificate-of-need program. But the program needs to be overhauled.

Note: Discussion of the proposal was sparked by a recent letter from the Federal Trade Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice recommending that South Carolina repeal its laws regarding certificates of need. Gov. Nikki Haley, who supports getting rid of CON, had requested the opinions from the federal agencies.

The State: Investing in colleges is investing in South Carolina's future

<http://www.thestate.com/opinion/op-ed/article57286698.html>

Glenn McConnell

Higher education is critical to South Carolina, and I want to commend The State for taking that topic head on

in its thorough assessment of Gov. Nikki Haley's sixth State of the State address ("A few corrections on the State of the State," Wednesday).

Note: In her speech, Gov. Haley said higher education does not "represent our greatest need" and then painted a one-sided picture of Wall Street-like excess: "high-rise dorms, sparkling new graduate centers and world-class administrative buildings."

Post and Courier: Act to reduce S.C. gun carnage

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160131/PC1002/160139908>

Editorial

It should have been evident to any South Carolinian even before Gov. Nikki Haley made it the central theme of her State of the State address on Jan. 20. South Carolina has emerged as a different state after last year. In 2015, gun violence in South Carolina drew international attention. In June, nine people were murdered during a Bible study at Charleston's Emanuel AME Church with a gun that the accused killer should not have been allowed to purchase.

Post and Courier: No-tax nuttiness keeps S.C. infrastructure on road to ruin

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160131/PC1002/160139910>

Ron Brinson

The Legislature seems to be approaching a finish line in providing some additional funding for our state's crumbling, congested roads, and too many unsafe bridges. The Senate is now the debate forum for a "compromise" package of vehicle registration fees and vehicle sales tax increases. The plan would also bring the first hike in state fuel taxes since 1987.

Greenville News: Our future depends on gas tax debate

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/opinion/contributors/2016/01/31/our-future-depends-gas-tax-debate/79365644/>

Jason Zacher

When times are good, businesses invest in their future. When times are good, government should invest in core government services for all of our futures. Once again, the battle lines are drawn in Columbia over whether we should invest in these core government services or maintain a status quo that leaves us ensconced near the bottom of any ranking of states.

The State: If we're paying contractors to learn their job, what else are taxpayers funding?

<http://www.thestate.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/cindi-ross-scope/article57325363.html#storylink=cpy>

Cindi Ross Scope

A FEW WEEKS ago a prominent businessman emailed Richland County Council members about news of waste, mismanagement and possible corruption in the county's penny transportation program. "We don't need this kind of reputation in the Midlands," he wrote, urging them to clean up the program lest they sabotage an effort to pass a similar sales tax in Lexington County.

Aiken Standard: The Citadel steps up with an honorable response

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160131/AIK0201/160139996/1018/AIK02>

Editorial

The Citadel's stated commitment to "honor, duty and respect" has played out in the way it handled a troubling incident last month, when photos surfaced showing freshmen dressed in pointed white hoods. Clearly, dressing in white hoods suggestive of the Ku Klux Klan – even while just singing Christmas songs – shows disrespect.

South Carolina News:

Post and Courier: South Carolina prisons a step ahead of president's new solitary confinement policies

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160130/PC1603/160139941>

Emma Dumain, Maya T. Prabhu

South Carolina corrections officials say they were already limiting solitary confinement for juveniles and adults prior to President Barack Obama's announcement to make similar changes at federal institutions. Obama said he will ban solitary confinement as a form of punishment for juvenile and low-level offenders in federal prisons, hoping it will serve as a model nationally for state and local lockups.

Associated Press: Congregations across SC taking part in event on gun violence

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=R2n8kJsQ

Bruce Smith

A Baptist church in Charleston will display white crosses on its lawn Sunday, one for every person killed in gun violence in the area this year. In Greenville, a Roman Catholic church will place nine flowers by the altar and leave an empty pew in the front of the sanctuary. Parishioners at a Methodist church in Columbia will enter a chapel passing beneath a rustic cross with cutouts of nine handguns hammered into the wood with long nails.

Aiken Standard: S.C. offers school choice programs for exceptional needs children

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160130/AIK0101/160139934/sc-offers-school-choice-programs-for-exceptional-needs-children>

Larry Wood

Today's story, the last in the series, focuses on the two private school choice programs the state offers to parents with exceptional needs children. Members of the Aiken County legislative delegation also share their thoughts on the programs and on school choice in South Carolina.

Post and Courier: Church shooting victim's husband driven to fight future gun deaths

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160130/PC16/160139933>

Jennifer Berry Hawes

When the Rev. Anthony Thompson got home from church on June 17, he was glad he'd arrived before his wife. Myra had asked him to pick up groceries, and he'd forgotten. He ran back out. She still wasn't home when he returned. She, too, had Bible study that night, although she went to her longtime church, Emanuel AME.

Local News:

The State: Richland leaders lay out intermediate, long-term flood recovery goals at retreat

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article57430453.html#storylink=cpy>

Sarah Ellis

Richland County is looking at a seven-year flood recovery process before the community can consider itself fully recuperated from October's historic deluge, disaster recovery personnel told County Council on Thursday. Flood recovery was a key discussion at council's annual planning retreat, held Thursday and Friday in downtown Charleston.

Island Packet: Beaufort County, magistrate judges headed for salary showdown

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/politics-government/article57388943.html>

Zach Murdock

Pay for Beaufort County's magistrate judges, has increased about 34-percent in the past five years, well outpacing that of other county employees. Additionally, the county picks up the cost of the 16 judges' health benefits, a perk not provided to some other county employees.

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