

Title: **Whysome Confederate flag supporters changed their views**
 Author: BY MEG KINNARD Associated Press
 Size: 126.79 column inches
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Why some Confederate flag supporters changed their views

BY MEG KINNARD

Associated Press

Thousands of people wrote to South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley after she said the Confederate flag must come down in response to last year's church shootings. Many were angered by her call, but some said the massacre changed their minds.

The Associated Press reached out to the writers of these emails and letters after the Republican governor's office released 10,000 pages of documents last week in response to requests for public records from last summer's flag debate.

Among them are poignant notes from flag supporters explaining how their

thoughts evolved after a white man who celebrated the symbol was charged with gunning down nine black people at a Bible study.

Justin Hough of North Carolina talked about his feelings now that reactions to police killings threaten to provoke even more violence.

"It's a tarnished, tattered image of the South," Hough said. Southerners who don't acknowledge that either don't understand the impact, or are "just lying about what it says to other people."

In his letter, Hough said he was a graduate of The Citadel military academy who once loved "the Confederate flag, singing Dixie and defending our right to say the

N-word."

"I came to understand," he wrote, that "attaching Southern pride to these relics of the past only served to solidify that the true beliefs of the South are the stereotypes of hatred, bigotry and racism."

Describing himself as a white descendant of Confederate veterans, Hough said that when he was growing up in rural Georgia, everyone used racial epithets and thought nothing of it. The Confederate flag was seen as part of their regional heritage, not a symbol of hate.

"It wasn't the rebel flag," he said. "It was Southern culture."

He said the hazing of a black Citadel cadet in the late 1980s made him realize that the symbol he respected could be harmful to others, and the church shootings made him even more convinced that it was time to let it go.

Many letter writers castigated Haley for trying to erase the memory of Confederate soldiers. Many others praised her decision as courageous.

SEE FLAG LETTERS, 5C

 **ONLINE**

AT THESTATE.COM Related videos, stories about the Confederate flag and Haley emails

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“

MY CHRISTIAN DUTY REQUIRES ME TO CALL FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE CONFEDERATE BATTLE FLAG.

Randolph, member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans

FROM PAGE 1C

FLAG LETTERS

The governor’s office redacted contact information and last names, but the AP managed to find some of the letter writers through the affiliations they mentioned. Hough wasn’t alone among dyed-in-the-wool southerners who said their feelings changed.

Randolph, of Myrtle Beach, said as a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, he long supported keeping the flag in place – until the Charleston shootings.

“The murder of the Rev. Clementa Pinckney along with 8 other of my Christian Brothers and Sisters changed my heart,” Randolph wrote. “My Christian duty requires me to call for the removal of the Confederate Battle flag.”

When Haley first campaigned for governor in 2010, she joined the ranks of South Carolina politicians who said the issue had been settled for all time by a 2000 compromise that moved the banner from atop the capitol dome to a 30-foot pole near a Confederate soldier

monument.

Running for re-election four years later, she said business executives considering whether to invest in South Carolina never mentioned the flag issue. She argued that “we really fixed all that” when voters elected her – an Indian-American – as the state’s first minority governor.

Then, photos of Dylann Roof posing with the battle flag emerged following the killings inside the historic Emanuel AME Church, fueling tough conversations nationwide over race relations and the legacy of Confederate symbols.

Just five days after the shootings, Haley said the flag must come down.

“The fact that people are choosing to use it as a sign of hate is something we cannot stand,” she said then. “The fact that it causes pain to so many is enough to move it from the Capitol grounds. It is, after all, a Capitol that belongs to all of us.”

Thousands gathered on July 10, 2015 to watch as the flag was furled and

sent to climate-controlled storage at the Confederate Relic Room.

For some, passions have not cooled a year later.

White people advocating secession and wearing Confederate uniforms hoisted another battle flag up a temporary pole at the same spot on Sunday. Police kept them separate from Black Lives Matter activists who shouted “That flag is hate!”

Some letter writers described their journeys across the gulf between them.

“After years of not understanding, I now have embraced that the haters have taken over this flag for their own terrible causes,” wrote Miels from Charleston, recalling his student years at Clemson University. “I joined in the singing of Dixie and the waving of the Confederate flag, as ways to encourage school spirit, I suppose.”

“At the time, I never had racist thoughts,” he said. “Well, times have changed.”

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Supporters of the Confederate flag raise it on a temporary flagpole Sunday on the grounds of the State House in Columbia during a rally. Counter-protesters showed up, but the event was peaceful.

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CHARLESTON SHOOTING

Confederate flag supporters describe their changed views

BY MEG KINNARD

Associated Press

Thousands of people wrote to Gov. Nikki Haley after she called for the removal of the flag at the Statehouse

Haley's office released emails, with last names redacted

AP tracked down some letter writers

COLUMBIA

Like many other white southerners, Justin Hough used to consider the Confederate flag part of his regional heritage, not a symbol of hate. That changed when a white man who posed with the flag was charged with killing nine black churchgoers last year.

Hough is one of thousands of people who felt compelled to share their feelings with South Carolina's governor after she called for removing the flag from its place of honor.

"It's a tarnished, tattered image of the South," Hough told The Associated Press, and southerners who don't acknowledge this either don't understand the impact, or are "just lying about what it says to other people."

The AP reached out to writers of these emails

and letters after Gov. Nikki Haley's office released 10,000 pages of documents last week in response to requests for public records from last summer's flag debate.

Hough now lives in North Carolina, where he expanded on the feelings he expressed last year, now that reactions to police killings threaten to provoke even more violence.

In his letter, Hough said he was a graduate of The Citadel military academy who once loved "the Confederate flag, singing Dixie and defending our right to say the N-word."

"I came to understand," he wrote, that "attaching

southern pride to these relics of the past only served to solidify that the true beliefs of the south are the stereotypes of hatred, bigotry and racism."

Describing himself as a white descendant of Confederate veterans, Hough told the AP that when he was growing up in rural Georgia, everyone used racial epithets and thought nothing of it.

But he said the hazing of a black Citadel cadet in the late 1980s made him realize that the symbol he respected could be harm-

ful to others, and the church shootings made him even more convinced that it was time to let it go.

Many letter writers castigated the Republican governor for trying to erase the memory of Confederate soldiers. Many others praised her decision as courageous.

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Running for re-election four years later, she said business executives considering whether to invest in South Carolina never mentioned the flag issue. She argued that "we really fixed all that" when voters elected her - an Indian-American - as the state's first minority governor.

The photos of Dylann Roof posing with the battle flag before the killings inside the historic Emanuel AME Church reopened difficult conversations about Confederate symbols, and just five days

after the shootings, Haley said the flag must come down.

"The fact that people are choosing to use it as a sign of hate is something we cannot stand," she said then. "The fact that it causes pain to so many is enough to move it from the Capitol grounds. It is, after all, a Capitol that belongs to all of us."

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AND RACISM.

Justin Hough's letter to Gov. Nikki Haley

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CONFEDERATE BATTLE FLAG.

Randolph, a Myrtle Beach resident

“

AFTER YEARS OF NOT UNDERSTANDING, I NOW HAVE EMBRACED THAT THE HATERS HAVE TAKEN OVER THIS FLAG FOR THEIR OWN TERRIBLE CAUSES.

Miels from Charleston



TIM DOMINICK AP

Gov. Nikki Haley speaks during a news conference June 22, 2015, flanked by U.S. Congressman James Clyburn, left, and U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, right.

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MEG KINNARD AP

Supporters of the Confederate flag raise it on a temporary flagpole at a rally July 10 on the grounds of the Statehouse. Counter-protesters showed up but the event was peaceful. The flag came down from its longtime position at the Statehouse last year after the Charleston shooting.

Title: **Haley touts business growth in Barnwell**
 Author: BY THOMAS GARDINER tgardiner@aikenstandard.com
 Size: 56.88 column inches
 Aiken, SC Circulation: 19635



Haley touts business growth in Barnwell

BY THOMAS GARDINER
tgardiner@aikenstandard.com

Touted as one of the greatest companies in South Carolina by Gov. Nikki Haley, Swiss Krono broke ground on a new high-density fiberboard manufacturing facility in Barnwell County on Wednesday.

Swiss Krono is an international company with facilities in eight countries that employ around 5,000 employees, said Swiss Krono Group Chairwoman Ines Kaindl.

The new manufacturing facility will be adjacent to the current Swiss Krono complex at 1251 Osborn Road in Barnwell. It is a \$230 million invest-

ment by the company and is expected to add about 100 jobs.

High-density fiberboard is made by highly compressing wood fibers, such as wood chips from processed hardwoods. The products are used in several applications including furniture construction and floor coverings.

The existing manufacturing facility in Barnwell has been producing laminate flooring for more than 10 years, but some of the required materials have to be bought and shipped in. With the new addition, Swiss Krono will be able to use local resources.

“We can bring in timber from right

here in South Carolina and turn it into high-density fiberboard right here in South Carolina,” said Zeb Portanova, president and CEO of Swiss Krono USA.

Portanova said the expansion has been in the works for a number of years, but market challenges and worldwide events prevented the investment from getting the green light.

One of the organizations involved in realizing the investment was the Southern Carolina Alliance.

The Alliance represents residents of

Please see **KRONO**, Page 10A

KRONO

CONTINUED from 1A

Barnwell, Bamberg, Allendale, Hampton, Colleton and Jasper counties. According to the organization’s website, the Alliance works to bring business, investments and jobs to the area.

S.C. Sen. Brad Hutto, D-Orangeburg, noted that the overall investment by Swiss Krono is the largest capital investment in the history of the regional alliance.

After remarks from project

and political leaders, they moved to the ceremonial earth-moving to mark the beginning of facility construction.

Haley said, “This isn’t just a celebration for Barnwell County but a celebration for the state of South Carolina.”

Thomas Gardiner is the SRS beat reporter for the *Aiken Standard*.

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STAFF PHOTO BY THOMAS GARDINER

President and CEO of Swiss Krono USA Zeb Portanova, left, S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley and Chairwoman of Swiss Krono Group Ines Kaindl shovel dirt in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new high-density fiberboard manufacturing facility.



STAFF PHOTO BY THOMAS GARDINER

Swiss Krono officials are joined by Gov. Nikki Haley, second from left, for a groundbreaking ceremony at the company's new high-density fiberboard manufacturing facility in Barnwell County.



Title: **Haleyhails western York Countyman's 'inspiring' free fireworksdisplay**
Author: BY ANDREW DYS adys@heraldonline.com
Size: 50.99 column inches
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GIVING BACK

Haley hails western York County man's 'inspiring' free fireworks display

Wesley White spent \$3,000 on fireworks display for Hickory Grove

Gov. Nikki Haley sent her thanks for inspiring people toward unity and joy

BY ANDREW DYS
adys@heraldonline.com

HICKORY GROVE

Some say nothing big ever happens in tiny Hickory Grove. They are wrong.

In the rural western York County town of 467 people, one man's free fireworks show that promoted unity, togetherness and community has been noticed by South Carolina's top elected official.

Gov. Nikki Haley.

"The governor thanked me!" said Wesley White. "How cool is that?"

Haley read a column on heraldonline.com about White's free fireworks show on July 4 where White invites everybody. Everybody meaning black and white, rich and poor. A warehouse worker,

White, 29, spends \$3,000 of his own money to put on the yearly show to show love for community and country.

Haley sent an official letter, personally signed and handwritten saying, "South Carolina appreciates you!" Haley wrote to thank White for "inspiring us all," and promoting "unity" and "joy." Haley praised White for bringing people together in times where there is so much divisiveness.

The letter arrived in the mail Monday, and White's family rushed it to his job for him to see.

"This just shows that the only way we can make this nation stand is for all

of us to come together and love each other," White said.

The Herald's story of White's selfless fireworks show brought a social media firestorm - all of it positive.

His Facebook page was "blowing up like fireworks," his story shared across the state. A Charlotte TV station visited Hickory Grove to interview him on July 4 after The Herald's story became huge.

The fireworks show that in past years had a few hundred people show up mushroomed to almost 2,000 people, with cars lined up and down the roads in a show of togetherness and fun.

"We had everybody here, every color, every kind of person, showing that together we can be great in America," White said.

White's help for others has moved to mentoring young people about making good choices and collecting backpacks and school supplies so that all

SEE FIREWORKS, 6A

Want to help?

You can help Wesley White help others. Visit his Facebook page or email him at whiteboy8625@yahoo.com

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FIREWORKS

FROM PAGE 3A

children regardless of income, race or what school they go to have new supplies when school starts in August.

“Every child out here should be able to go to school with a smile on their face and a backpack filled with what they need to learn and succeed,” White said.

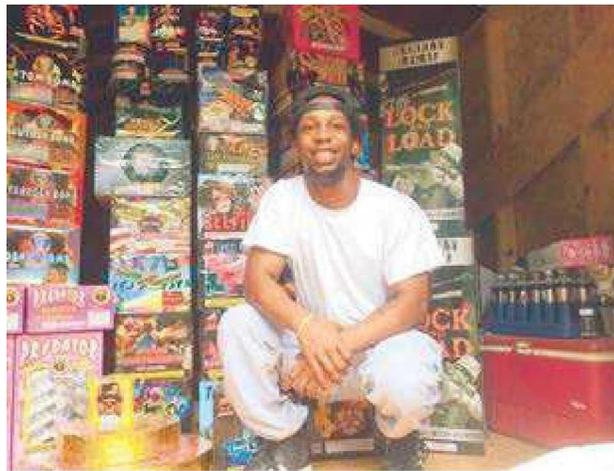
After the joy of July 4, White like so many Americans was shocked, saddened and hurt by the violence in Louisiana, Minnesota and Texas. The

shootings of black men by

police is terrible and unacceptable, White said, but the shooting of police officers in Dallas is worse.

“There is no room for retaliation, no place for violence, in a world where we need love,” White said. “What I did I hope shows that we can love one another and make a difference that way, by sharing what we have with others.”

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FILE/ Andrew Dys

Wesley White with some of the fireworks he set off for free to serve the community in Hickory Grove.

Title: **SC officials attend London air show**
 Author:
 Size: 9.76 column inches
 Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



SC officials attend London air show

COLUMBIA

Commerce Department officials are in London this week to market South Carolina at an international air show.

Agency spokeswoman Adrienne Fairwell said Monday the 20 people in South Carolina's delegation include seven Commerce employees. Others are representative of private companies and local economic development groups.

Fairwell says the Monday-through-Sunday trip is expected to cost taxpayers about \$50,000.

Neither Gov. Nikki Haley nor Commerce Secretary Bobby Hitt is attending the event held every two years. Haley attended in 2012.

At the time, Hitt called the Farnborough International Air Show the biggest marketing event of the year for his agency. He said the focus was on building relationships and attracting Boeing suppliers to South Carolina.

The agency spent more than \$97,000 that year to send Haley and 10 other state employees.

Title: **Jackson Village to protest in Columbia**
 Author: By Eileen Keithly ekeithly@southstrandnews.com
 Size: 67.27 column inches
 Georgetown, SC Circulation: 8446



Jackson Village to protest in Columbia

By EILEEN KEITHLY

ekeithly@southstrandnews.com

Members of the Jackson Village community in the Plantersville area of Georgetown County plan to rally on the steps of the state capitol on Friday, July 15, to protest a yearly sewer tax that some residents say is “illegal” and “racist.”

The Rev. Benjamin Grate, spokesperson for the group, said the rally will take place at 9 a.m. and bring awareness

to a decade-long problem that local authorities in Georgetown County have chosen to ignore.

“We have been gathering for many years to fight this illegal and racist tax,” Grate said. “This tax was only given to the black residents of Plantersville – the white residents were exempt. ...

“We are tired of waiting for someone in Georgetown to help us. These taxes are unjust and it was a conspiracy to bind the tax to our household taxes, so when we cannot pay them, our homes and our property are taken away from us.”

The rally and protest in Columbia is a step many residents say they have been

trying to avoid since 2006, when a Georgetown County Water and Sewer District project, they say, was forced upon them.

GCWSD Executive Director Ray Gagnon was not employed by the district until after the sewer project was completed. But he told the Times in March that the decision of where the sewer lines were run in Plantersville had

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Jackson Village to protest in Columbia

FROM PAGE 1A

nothing to do with discrimination or racism.

“This project was a very lengthy and tedious undertaking and it had nothing to do with race,” Gagnon said.

Gagnon said the project helped do away with antiquated and failing septic tank systems that were leaking raw sewage onto properties, contaminating the community’s drinking water and posing numerous health hazards to residents.

While the actual assessments only began in 2013, some black residents claim that white plantation owners in Plantersville were able to opt out of having sewer brought to their homes – avoiding the \$250-per-year, 20-year assessment which

residents say they have struggled to pay.

An investigation by the Times earlier this year revealed that when residents do not pay their yearly sewer tax, their property is slated for and sold at public auction.

Plantersville resident Lillian Milton knows exactly how that process works.

“When I went to pay my taxes last year a clerk told me that my house had been sold at auction,” Milton said. “I had to pay the tax, delinquent fees and I had to pay a redemption fee which was a percentage of the price that my house brought at the auction, and I’m still using my septic tank – we never tapped in to the service.”

Based on the number of people who have attended

the pre-rally meetings, Grate said the group is expecting a large crowd in Columbia.

“We have people coming from all over the country to protest this tax,” Grate said. “Many property owners that are being taxed don’t even live in Georgetown County, but have left the area to work and are planning on returning to their property when they retire.”

Beulah Augustas lives in Brooklyn, New York, but her family has owned land in Plantersville for years. She told the Times that she fully supports the rally and looks forward to protesting on Friday.

“I very much want to be there to support the movement to abolish the tax,” Augustas said from her home

in New York. “The state lawmakers need to take action and help the people out of this tax that is financially crippling the folks in Plantersville.”

Plantersville resident Luther Windley attended a pre-rally meeting at the Plantersville community center in January and will also make his way to Columbia.

“I don’t think the people in Columbia realize how serious the situation in Plantersville has become,” Windley said. “I can’t even get the water and sewer district to run water to my house, but they put a sewer tap in my front yard and told me I had to hook up to the sewer or else. They send me a bill each month for about \$40, and they make me pay \$250

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each year for the tax, yet I don't have water running to my house."

Windley said he was forced to have a well dug in his yard, and he pumps water electrically from the well into his sewer system for sanitation reasons.

"What I don't understand is that I am the last house in the community that was made to have sewer run to my house," Windley said. "And just around the corner from me is the road where all the big plantations are that didn't have to get the sewer. I can see their property from mine – so how is that fair? It's not fair at all."

Grate said he and other members of the protest group have been in Columbia since July 11 setting up meetings with state agencies and lawmakers that will take place after the protest July 15.

"We have come here to take action against this illegal tax," Grate said. "We want to meet with the lawmakers of our state and ask them to help us find a way out of this tax that is destroying our Gullah Geechee culture in Georgetown."

State Sen. Ronnie A. Saab said he is more than happy to meet with the group in regards to the annual sewer tax, but he might not be

available to do so on Friday.

"I have a very tight schedule on Friday, but I do want to meet with the residents of Jackson Village to see what we can do to help them out with this tax situation," Saab said Tuesday morning when contacted by the Times. "I fully understand the burden, and we need to help them find some relief."

Chaney Adams, Gov. Nikki Haley's press secretary, said the governor is aware of Friday's rally and has taken some preliminary steps to assist the group.

"We ... have asked that the state Office of Economic Opportunity work with the

Waccamaw Economic Opportunity Council to determine if these residents in the Georgetown community are eligible for assistance," Adams said.

The Office of Economic Opportunity, Chaney said, is a state agency that works in partnership with community action agencies and other non-profit agencies to administer and distribute grants to South Carolinians living in poverty.



Grate

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Author:

Size: 9.45 column inches

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BRIEFLY

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The agency spent more than \$97,000 that year to send Haley and 10 other state employees.

¹⁴⁸
Haley: Roughly \$1B in damage during October flood

Governor touts road and home repairs since record rains

BY AVERY G. WILKS
The State

COLUMBIA — South Carolina suffered roughly \$1 billion in losses during last fall's historic storm, Gov. Nikki Haley said Thursday.

But fixed roads and ongoing repairs to storm-damaged homes highlighted Haley's rundown of the state's triumphs after record rain on Oct. 4.

"We saw devastation like we had never seen, and we quickly got to work," Haley said.

The losses included \$741 million in damage to housing, \$137 million in damage to state roads and more than \$200 million in damage to other public assets, Haley said.

Thirty-six of 541 state roads closed by the storm remain closed. But two-thirds of those are closed because of unstable or failed dams, Haley said.

The Haley-backed One S.C. Flood Recovery Fund has received nearly \$1.65 million in donations and \$12.7 million in donated skilled labor, she said.

Those donations have helped volunteer organizations rebuild or begin repairs to 1,100 homes statewide as S.C. officials await nearly \$157 million in federal flood-recovery aid, she said.

"We weren't going to let people live like that. We knew that we had to fix it," Haley said. "The One S.C. Fund allowed us to go ahead and get these homes started. It's going to be several months, still, until we get the money that we need from HUD."

Not everyone is thrilled with Haley's post-flood response.

S.C. farmers were upset when the Republican governor vetoed a \$40 million state-aid package aimed at covering an estimated \$370 million in crop losses from the storm. "It was frustrating for all of us in agriculture," S.C. Farm Bureau president Harry Ott

said Thursday. "We simply didn't understand why she couldn't understand that ... agriculture is different than every other small business."

Lawmakers overwhelmingly voted to override Haley's veto.

Haley said she couldn't support bailing out farmers while other small businesses and individuals suffered. "To place one group over the others just didn't seem fair to me," she said Thursday.

The storm left 19 dead and, at one point, 40,000 people without water, according to the governor's office. More than 20,000 S.C. residents were displaced and more than 1,500 residents were rescued from flood waters, Haley's office said.

S.C. communities now are awaiting nearly \$157 million in aid from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

When it arrives, that money – about \$96.8 million will go directly to the state – can be used to meet remaining "unmet housing, economic development and infrastructure needs that resulted from thousands of homes and small businesses being damaged or destroyed" during the storm, according to HUD.

State officials have said they will use the money to ensure vulnerable residents have suitable housing. The state has scheduled several town halls starting next week to present its preliminary plan for the money.

Haley also said Thursday that retired Army Col. Kevin Shwedo would return to his role as director of the state Department of Motor Vehicles after an eight-month stint as the state's flood recovery director.

He will be replaced by retired Army Col. J.R. Sanderson, who has worked in Shwedo's recovery office.

"He has been with Col. Shwedo since Day One, so this is not bringing in someone new," Haley said. "This is someone who has been doing all the work, and now we're just going to the next phase. And so that next phase is very much dealing with how we're going to deal with the housing grant money going forward and where we're going to go from there."

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SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTO



A Chevrolet SUV navigates waters of the October 2015 flood where Broad Street Extension crosses Green Swamp near Walmart

Jasper County
Sun
Ridgeland, SC
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65216



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State shorts Jasper in funding

Local government fund shortage impacting counties, cities

BY JESSICAH LAWRENCE

Jasper County Sun Times
jessicah.lawrence@morris.com

The shortage of state funding support is hitting counties and municipalities around the state, leaving local taxpayers to cover the shortfall.

Fortunately in Jasper County, elected officials have fought not to raise the property taxes in order to cover the shortage of state funding to pay for state mandated services such as the court system, law enforcement, voter registration and veteran affairs among others.

The local government fund was created to be a consistent revenue source for county and city governments. The fund is a distribution formula of tax dollars collected by the state on behalf of local governments.

Each year, cities and counties are to receive an amount equal to 4.5 percent of the previous year's state General Fund base revenue.

The Municipal Association of South Carolina says the local government fund ebbs and flows with the state's economy. When the Great Recession hit in 2008, counties and cities struggled along with the state but legislators also made cuts to the fund during the time period.

While some of those cuts have been restored, the local governments are not receiving the total amounts it should based on the formula.

County administrator Andy Fulghum said the council has tried to lobby along with MSAC to receive the total allotted amount Jasper should receive.

Based on Jasper's population it should have received \$1.3 million for the 2015-16 fiscal year, but only \$936,097 was distributed from the local government fund.

To cover the assessor's office, clerk of court, probate judge, public defender, department of social services, MIAP program, coroner, department of juvenile justice, voter registration, solicitor's office, sheriff's office, magistrate judges, the register of deeds, probation and paroles, health department and veteran affairs it costs a total of \$5.7 million. All of those services are mandated by the state.

"All of the things that most local people think the state is paying for we are actually covering the costs to operate," Fulghum said. "While it's a state service, we have to provide office space and cover the expenses. As the local government fund shrinks, the local taxpayers end up paying for it."

Financial officer Ronnie Malphrus said the county will receive a slight increase for the fiscal year 2016-17 with a \$983,395 budgeted to cover the state mandated services.

"We've tried not to increase the millage rate and haven't in the last for the three to four years. But that means we've cut in other places. If we received what we were supposed to from the local government fund, we could fund other needs," Malphrus said. "We're getting less than what the law says they are required to distribute."

Capital needs is an area where Jasper cannot seem to fund without a millage rate increase. Malphrus stated the vehicles, building maintenance and the need for more firefighters are among the needs that could be funded if the county received its total amount due from the state.

The state treasurer distributes revenue from the fund quarterly to cities and counties. The amount distributed is calculated on a per capita basis determined by the last official census figures.

Gov. Nikki Haley recommended full funding of the fund based on its statutory 4.5 percent formula - about \$311 million. Neither the House nor the Senate agreed to fund it fully. A total of \$212.6 million is set to be distributed to the local counties and cities for the fiscal year 2016-16.

Fulghum said the county will continue to lobby with MASC but until a change is made, local taxpayers will have to keep funding the state mandated services provided.

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Relief deadline for farm aid

JOAN YATES
 Editor – The Link

When the South Carolina House of Representatives passed a law in May establishing the South Carolina Farm Aid Grant Program, \$40 million was made available to South Carolina farmers who suffered at least a 40 percent loss of an affected crop as a result of last October's flooding.

The official application for the South Carolina Farm Aid Grant Program opened July 1. The application is available online at agriculture.sc.gov/sc-farm-aid/.

It is the only application farmers can fill out to receive disaster relief aid from the State fund. The application deadline is Aug. 15. Any application received after Aug. 15 will not be eligible to receive funds.

Farmers are advised to fill

out the application as soon as possible to allow time for review and any necessary follow-up.

At this time, the state relief through the S.C. Department of Agriculture is the only relief available to S.C. farmers.

"Our farm families do so much for us here in South Carolina," said S.C. Rep. Richie Yow. "In these times that nature took its course on South Carolina, our farmers held strong, and through this aid, I hope that it will help keep our small rural farms around for generations to come."

Clemson Extension Service, along with SCDA, is hosting training sessions to help farmers with the application process.

The meeting closest to Chesterfield County will be held tomorrow, July 7, from 10 a.m. until noon at Moree's

River Lodge, located at 143 Kolb's Tomb Rd (off US 15/US 401), in Society Hill. No registration required, and light refreshments will be provided.

For more meeting sites and dates, or to be put in contact with a Farm Aid staff member, call Trish DeHond at (843) 858-0754, Megan Heidkamp at (803) 734-2210 or go to agriculture.sc.gov and click on "Farm Aid."

In addition, South Carolina Farm Bureau announced the South Carolina Disaster Recovery team will be holding informational sessions for CDBG funding for housing needs. This is an opportunity for farmers not only to address the Gov. Nikki Haley's disaster recovery plan, but also to identify the needs on farms that may not be covered, even with the relief the state has to offer.