

Title: **Governor becomes central figure of Senate 33 race**
 Author: BY TOM O'DARE TOM.ODARE@MYHORRYNEWS.COM
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Governor becomes central figure of Senate 33 race

BY TOM O'DARE
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The intensity of the race for the state District 33 Senate seat between incumbent Luke Rankin and challenger Scott Pyle picked up Friday with S.C. Governor Nikki Haley being the key figure. Rankin and Pyle are squaring off in the June 14 Republican primary. Haley addressed a large group of supporters for Pyle

See **DISTRICT 33 RACE**, Page 3A

DISTRICT 33: Term limits supported by Pyle

FROM PAGE 1A

at a Carolina Forest restaurant, saying she was throwing her support behind Pyle because he is a bigger proponent of Republican values than Rankin.

"If you want to vote for a Republican, vote for Scott," she said. "If you want to vote for a Democrat, vote for Luke. He used to be a Democrat and he still votes the same way."

The governor said Rankin has challenged her on issues such as ethics reform and rejecting Common Core education standards.

"Luke is the chairman of the Senate Ethics Committee and he's fought our efforts for ethics reform," Haley added.

Taking a jab at Rankin's 24-year tenure in Columbia, Haley said she supported Pyle's stand on term limits.

Pyle said in addition to the proposals mentioned by Haley, he will work to bring money back to Horry County for congested roads such as U.S. 501.

"I will be accessible to everyone in this district and promise to serve with a personal touch with the people of District 33 all ways in mind," he added.

Just a few minutes after Pyle's lunchtime gathering, Rankin held a press conference nearby to announce that Horry County Council Chairman Mark Lazarus will be the chairman for his Senate campaign.

Rankin and Lazarus were joined by state representatives Alan Clemmons, Kevin Hardee and Jeff Johnson.

Lazarus said he's known Rankin for years and is humbled and honored to lead his campaign efforts.

"And I'm profoundly disappointed by the attacks on Luke from our governor," he added. "The governor is mad at Luke because she can't control him."

Clemmons said he wasn't scheduled to address the press conference but had to address his concerns that Haley's Political action committee is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to unseat elected Republicans.

"The governor went to New York to raise thousands of dollars to unseat elected Horry County officials," he said. "I don't want New York-based PACs to be the rule of the day in Horry County."

Rankin used the occasion to counter Haley's accusations.

He said despite what Haley is telling everyone, he did vote against Common Core and

he's actually supported a stronger ethics reform package than what she proposed.

Rankin said the governor is out of touch with the people, especially those in Horry County.

"She didn't support our farmers and she overrode the tourism development fee that provides tax relief for the residents of Myrtle Beach," he said.

As to her calling him a Democrat, Rankin shrugged and said, "Consider the source. She's entitled to her opinion, not to the facts."

Rankin said his top priority for the next session of the General Assembly would be "roads, roads, roads. We haven't had the infusion of money for our roads like we need."

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TOM O'DARE | THE HERALD

Scott Pyle, candidate for the District 33 Senate seat, is joined by Gov. Nikki Haley.



TOM O'DARE | THE HERALD

Incumbent state Sen. Luke Rankin, left, announced that Horry County Council Chairman Mark Lazarus, right, will be the chairman for his Senate campaign.



Title: **Tourism tax not likely headed for referendum**
 Author: BY TOM O'DARE TOM.ODARE@MYHORRYNEWS.COM
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Tourism tax not likely headed for referendum MB mayor, council members want to decide future of fee

BY TOM O'DARE

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The first time the tourism tax was approved in Myrtle Beach nearly 10 years ago, it was the Myrtle Beach City Council that gave it a thumbs up.

And with the approval of the South Carolina General Assembly last week, the city council can again put it in place for another 10 years when it expires in 2009.

The charge — also called the tourism development fee — is a 1 percent tax imposed in the city of

Myrtle Beach on prepared foods, retail sales, accommodations and mixed liquor drinks. The tax expires in 2019 and had to be renewed by the state legislature to continue.

The TDF only affects counties that receive at least \$14 million in accommodations taxes each year.

That means the tax currently applies to only municipalities in Horry County and Myrtle Beach is the only city using it.

After the first year the tax was in place, the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce received 80 percent of the tax revenues for out-of-market tourism programs and the city could use the remaining 20 percent for property tax rollbacks and new tourism infrastructure projects. That rollback means an 80 percent tax cut for permanent residents on their homes in the city.

 See **TOURISM TAX**, Page 3A

TOURISM TAX from Page 1A

When the legislature originally approved the tourism tax, it gave the affected cities two options to put in place: approve it by a supermajority of the city council or put the tax to a vote in a referendum for the city residents.

The Myrtle Beach City Council chose to make the decision itself rather than let the voters decide.

When the General Assembly passed the renewal legislation this session, it left the same requirements in that were in the original law to put the tax in place.

Gov. Nikki Haley vetoed the bill, saying she felt implementing any tax should only be decided by the people, not by city councils.

Last week, the General As-

sembly overwhelmingly overrode Haley's veto, much to the delight of local elected officials and chamber president Brad Dean.

Dean said the fee came at a time when the economy was not doing well and Myrtle Beach needed an extra boost to keep up with other tourist destinations.

"The revenue from the fee has been instrumental in propelling us to top positions for visitors each year and continuing it will help bring us closer to our goal of 20 million visitors to the Grand Strand each year," he said.

Myrtle Beach Mayor John Rhodes said he favors enacting the TDF again by supermajority of the council rather than putting it to a referendum.

Rhodes said many of the people who live here now weren't here when the fee first went into place and don't know it's the reason for their lower taxes.

"We'd have to educate everyone on the merits of the fee before the vote," he said. "I'd rather have the guarantee of the council voting on it than risk it not passing in a referendum."

Rhodes added that just because the city is doing well with bringing in more visitors, it can't let up now and the TDF is a big factor in keeping the city's name out there.

Councilman Michael Chestnut concurred with Rhodes in leaning toward having the council make the decision on the fee again.

"The voters elected me to be their voice to make such decisions," Chestnut said. "I look at it that the voters have already made their decision on this matter."

State Rep. Alan Clemmons, R-Myrtle Beach, was a co-sponsor of the bill to renew the TDF.

He said he was pleased that both sides of the General Assembly overwhelmingly agreed to go against the governor.

"Once everyone in Columbia realized this was just as much about tax relief, then they whole-heartedly agreed with it," Clemmons said.

Rhodes said there's no immediate timeline for the council to take up the TDF, as long as it's done before it expires.

Title: **Four vying for open Senate 34 seat**
 Author: BY TOM O'DARE TOM.ODARE@MYHORRYNEWS.COM
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Four vying for open Senate 34 seat

BY TOM O'DARE
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Four Republicans are squaring off in next week's GOP primary for the Senate District 34 seat that's currently held by Sen. Ray Cleary.

Cleary decided not to run for re-election this year.

District 34 takes in much of the coastal region from the southern part of Horry County down to the McClellanville area of Charleston County.

State Rep. Stephen Goldfinch, Horry County attorney Reese Boyd, Pawleys Island businessman Joe Ford and retired Horry County resident Dick Withington will be on the June 14 ballot.

Goldfinch says that roads are at the top of his priority list should he move over to the Senate side of the General Assembly next session.

"Roads are at the top of everybody's minds across the state, from residents to big businesses," he said. "When Michelin tells South Carolina they're not going to expand their operations here until the state roads are improved, something needs to be done now."

Goldfinch said his second top platform item is improving education in South Carolina.

He said the state needs to get over the mindset that every student has to go to a four-year college.

"We need to improve our vocational school system for those who aren't going to college," he added. "There are some very good paying jobs that don't require a college degree. There's nothing wrong with being a pipefitter or welder."

Last week, Gov. Nikki Haley came out in support of his opponent Boyd, specifically targeting defeating Goldfinch.

Goldfinch said he was surprised that Haley came out so strong against him.

"We've agreed on 99 percent of the issues since she's been governor," he said. "But we disagreed on the issue of the gas tax and

funding infrastructure."

He said the governor seems to have been distracted lately in doing her job.

"The governor has been very disappointing over the last year," Goldfinch said. "Our governor seems to have been looking for another job lately and not looking after our state."

Boyd, on the other hand, said he was pleased to have the governor's backing and he feels that the people of District 34 will take that to mean she's picked a real conservative to serve in the state Senate.

Boyd said his main focus if elected to the seat will be to bring the Senate back in line with the wishes of the people of South Carolina.

"For years, a small group of senators or even one person can block legislation coming through that body and that's not right," he said. "I think we can get enough new blood in the Senate to bring more transparency to that chamber and provide legislation the way it's supposed to be done."

Boyd added that passing true ethics reform is also a very high priority for him.

"It shouldn't take four years to try and get an ethics reform bill through," he said. "With more transparency and true ethics reform, other needs such as improving roads, infrastructure and education will come about."

Ford also believes that providing a true ethics reform in the state is the first step in getting all other things done in the General Assembly.

He said the public doesn't trust the state legislature any more.

"We cannot have better roads, schools or government if we do not have meaningful ethical reform which is open for public review," Ford said. "Anyone who is opposed to this type of ethical reform should not be trusted to represent you."

Withington is also running as a Republican candidate for Horry County Council District 4 against incumbent Gary Loftus.

He was charged in March with offering to take money from Loftus in return for dropping out of the race against the incumbent.

Title: **S.C. Dems: Trump is a 'threat'; withdraw your endorsements**
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S.C. Dems: Trump is a 'threat'; withdraw your endorsements

BY MEG KINNARD

Associated Press

COLUMBIA

South Carolina's top Democrat is calling on elected Republicans to rescind their endorsements of Donald Trump, saying Wednesday that the presumptive GOP nominee is a racist and xenophobe, in part due to his race-based attacks on a Hispanic judge.

During a news conference, party Chairman Jaime Harrison said that, while he respects Republicans and their party, he doesn't understand how officials including Gov. Nikki Haley can condemn Trump's divisive rhetoric, yet say they still feel he's the best choice to be president.

"To say these types of remarks, and then constantly defend them, is disqualifying for a presidential candidate, period," Harrison said, adding that a President Trump would put the country "in peril."

Trump has been in damage control mode amid the controversy over his stance that U.S. District Judge Gonzalo Curiel couldn't preside fairly over a case involving Trump University because of what Trump called his Mexican heritage. Trump wants to build a wall be-

tween the U.S. and Mexico to keep Mexican migrants from illegally crossing the border.

Illinois Sen. Mark Kirk has already taken back his endorsement of Trump, and House Speaker Paul Ryan called the comments "racist."

One by one, Harrison on Wednesday called out more than half a dozen elected Republicans in South Carolina, some of whom have offered lukewarm endorsements of Trump as other GOP candidates left the race.

That list included Republican Tim Scott, the first black U.S. senator from the Deep South since Reconstruction. Scott, who previously supported Marco Rubio, has called Trump's comments "racially toxic," yet said he'll still support the party's nominee.

It also featured Haley, who has said she would back the eventual Republican nominee, which she hoped would be Rubio and then, after his departure, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz.

Last week, Haley said she wished Trump communicated differently because bad

things result from divisive rhetoric, as evidenced by last June's Charleston massacre. Haley said divisive speech motivated Dylann Roof to gun down nine black parishioners at historic Emanuel AME Church. Police have said the white 22-year-old charged with their killings wanted to start a race war.

Harrison said that only U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham has out-and-out refused to support a candidate who Harrison said "plays footsie with the world's worst regimes."

Graham, who once compared choosing between Trump and Cruz to "being shot or poisoned," has said he'll support neither the billionaire businessman nor presumptive Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton in the general election. This week, Graham told The New York Times that Trump's comments about Curiel represented "the most un-American thing from a politician since Joe McCarthy." He also added: "If anybody was looking for an off-ramp, this is probably it."

The Trump campaign did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Title: **Haley signs bill funding billions for roads by borrowing**
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Haley signs bill funding billions for roads by borrowing

BY SEANNA ADCOX
 Associated Press
 COLUMBIA

Gov. Nikki Haley reluctantly signed legislation Wednesday that will let the state borrow \$2.2 billion to jump-start improvements to South Carolina's deteriorating roads, saying she did so only because its so-called reforms are better than nothing.

The Republican governor said the law provides a step forward in highway funding and marginal improvements to the Department of Transportation's governance.

"To claim this law as

anything close to a victory, to represent it in any way as a true solution to our infrastructure problems" would be deceiving the public, she said in a letter to legislative leaders she sent along with the signed law.

The bill allowing for \$2.2 billion in borrowing over 10 years for infrastructure is funded with \$200 million annually in existing fees and vehicle sales taxes. Department of Transportation Secretary Christy Hall has said that frees up other

money the agency can use to replace bridges and pave roads, allowing more than \$4 billion worth of total work.

Haley criticized the behind-the-scenes negotiations of the compromise approved in the legislative session's final days.

Senators passed their plan late May 31, hours after House Speaker Jay Lucas took the podium to blast senators for their inaction and Haley for not demanding a vote. The House gave

final approval a day later.

Lucas said Wednesday the governor may have gotten better reform if she'd engaged in the final negotiations as he requested.

"The House never suggested that these DOT reform measures were perfect and we stand by our commitment to finding a long-term, sustainable funding stream to permanently fix our roads," said Lucas, R-Hartsville.

SEE ROADS, 6A

FROM PAGE 3A

ROADS

Senate President Pro Tem Hugh Leatherman has repeatedly called his borrowing proposal a step in addressing the state's crumbling highways — not a fix.

The DOT has said it needs an additional \$1.5 billion annually over several decades to bring the nation's fourth-largest highway system to good condition.

"I appreciate the governor's signature and understand her frustration," said House Assistant Majority Leader Gary Simrill, R-Rock Hill, who has led the House's road-funding efforts since fall 2014.

When faced with the prospect of that effort dying, "do you wait and tell the people

of South Carolina that no, there will be no roads fix over the next 12 months, or that this is incremental progress?" he said. "You have a shot in the arm to dilapidated roads."

Haley's insistence that she would veto anything increasing the state's 16-cents-per-gallon gas tax stymied previous highway-funding efforts. After winning re-election, Haley said she could support an increase under certain conditions.

But those conditions seemed to only further complicate the process.

Last year, the session ended with a filibuster by senators who oppose in-

creasing gas taxes unchanged since 1987. Like Haley, they insisted on first restructuring the transportation agency to give the governor's office more oversight before sending it more money.

The law includes leadership changes, but Haley calls them "little more than window dressing."

Sen. Tom Davis, who filibustered last year but liked the borrowing proposal that didn't raise taxes, said he voted against the compromise because it managed to make a bad system worse. The law removes Haley's ability to appoint the agency's secretary and keeps a commission she wanted

abolished. Currently, Hall answers to both Haley and the commission.

The law that takes effect July 1 gives the governor input in selecting all eight commissioners, but legislators still must approve them through a multi-step process. Commissioners would again hire the DOT secretary. The governor has appointed the secretary since legislators last restructured the agency in 2007.

Without a new law, the agency would have reverted to its pre-2007 governance that gave the governor's office no control and did not require a statewide prioritization of projects.

Haley said that's the only

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reason she signed it.

“So let us all be honest about what we accomplished in this bill: incremental and incomplete reform, or put a different way, far less than the people of South Carolina both expect and deserve from us.”

“

**TO CLAIM THIS LAW
AS ANYTHING
CLOSE TO A
VICTORY ... AS A
TRUE SOLUTION TO
OUR
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PROBLEMS WOULD
BE DECEIVING THE
PUBLIC.**

Gov. Nikki Haley, in a letter

Title: **Haleysigns loan forgiveness for SC State into law**
 Author:
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Haley signs loan forgiveness for SC State into law

South Carolina State University is officially free of \$12 million in state loans, but it must repay a separate, \$6 million loan over the next 16 years.

Gov. Nikki Haley signed the terms into law Tuesday without fanfare.

The law forgives \$8 million next year, then \$2 million each in the following two years, provided S.C. State's finances keep improving. The university must make yearly payments of \$355,000 on the other loan. State officials approved both loans in 2014.

Lawmakers think erasing the debt will help the state's only public historically black university keep its accreditation.

S.C. State's accrediting agency will decide the college's fate later this month. Following years of probation, its accreditation will either be restored or pulled. That would force the 120-year-old college in Orangeburg to close.

— ASSOCIATED PRESS

Title: **SC Democrats call on Haley, other GOP leaders to dump Trump**

Author:

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SC Democrats call on Haley, other GOP leaders to dump Trump

S.C. Democratic Party chairman Jaime Harrison on Wednesday called out the state's Republican leaders, including Gov. Nikki Haley, for supporting Donald Trump's presidential bid despite the real-estate mogul's controversial rhetoric.

"It has been obvious since very early in this presidential campaign that Donald Trump is a racist, a bigot, a xenophobe, and a misogynist who plays footsie with the world's worst regimes and advocates committing war crimes," Harrison said in a press conference at the party's Columbia headquarters.

Harrison noted some elected S.C. officials publicly have objected to Trump's comments and called on them to withdraw their support for the presumptive GOP presidential nominee.

"Gov. Haley has made her objections to Donald Trump very clear on many occasions," Haley spokeswoman Chaney Adams responded.

— AVERY G. WILKS

Title: **Haley signs roadsplan with Malfunction Junctionfix**
 Author: BY CASSIE COPE ccope@thestate.com
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FIXING OUR ROADS

Haley signs roads plan with Malfunction Junction fix

Plan also will pay to replace nearly 400 bridges

But Haley expresses disappointment with law's reforms to Transportation Department

BY CASSIE COPE

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Gov. Nikki Haley signed a \$4 billion road-and-bridge spending plan Thursday that includes repairing Malfunction Junction in Richland and Lexington counties.

But Haley said finding a long-term road-repair solution again will be the No. 1 priority when lawmakers return to Columbia

for the 2017 legislative session. This year's spending proposal is "not of the magnitude or sustainability" to address the long-term needs of the state's highway system, she said.

Haley also said reforms to the state Transportation Department's structure, which are part

of the new law, are inadequate.

After a gas-tax hike proposal died in the Senate earlier this year, lawmakers approved the stopgap spending plan, including money to repair Malfunction

SEE ROADS, 2A

ROADS

FROM PAGE 1A

Junction, the state's No. 1 roads priority since 2008.

Easing congestion on the area's roadways will grow jobs and the economy, said state Rep. James Smith, D-Richland, who represents a portion of Malfunction Junction, where up to 133,600 vehicles travel every day. It also will increase safety - reducing crashes and saving lives, Smith said.

Untangling the 14 miles of interstate, 12 interchanges and 19 bridges of Malfunction Junction could cost up to \$1.5 billion, according to prelimi-

nary estimates by the Transportation Department. The state already has set aside nearly \$93 million for the project.

The roads and bridges of Malfunction Junction were built during the 1960s. Improvements were made during the 1970s and 1980s as the area grew.

Now, thousands more commuters - from Chapin, Dutch Fork, Irmo, Lexington, St. Andrews and the north shore of Lake Murray - use Malfunction Junction daily to travel to downtown Columbia.

State Rep. Rick Quinn, R-Lexington, who also

represents a part of Malfunction Junction, said travelers commuting in the area have to double the time that it should take to get to and from work. "It's just a real mess."

However, Quinn, a Haley ally, said he had mixed emotions about the road-repair bill.

"I'm very excited that the No. 1 priority ... is funded and is slated to be fixed finally. But I'm also very concerned that we didn't get the reform we wanted."

'OUR BUSINESS IS UNFINISHED'

The plan also includes

replacing nearly 400 bridges across the state and giving the governor more control over the state Transportation Department.

The changes to the structure of the Transportation Department emerged last week after S.C. House Speaker Jay Lucas called on the Senate and Haley to pass the then-stalled proposal.

However, in her letter to lawmakers, Haley said a long-term road-repair solution, including more Transportation Department reforms, still is needed.

"I am confident that, once again, roads will be

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at the top of our agenda” in 2017, Haley wrote. “It has to be. Our business is unfinished.”

Most legislators say a long-term road-repair solution will require increasing the state’s 16.75-cent-a-gallon gas tax, the third lowest in the nation, to pay for repairs.

Lucas, R-Darlington, whose House passed a gas-tax increase last year to pay for road repairs by a 87-20 vote, said his chamber again would support a long-term solution.

“(W)e stand by our commitment to finding a long-term, sustainable funding stream to permanently fix our roads,” Lucas said.

The S.C. Chamber of Commerce applauded Haley for signing the plan. “(T)his bill is far from

perfect and falls woefully short of a sustainable, long-term solution to a problem that has plagued our state for too long,” said chamber president Ted Pitts, a former Haley chief of staff.

‘FAR LESS THAN THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH CAROLINA ... DESERVE’

Haley expressed disappointment in the new law’s restructuring of the commission that oversees DOT.

“In the waning hours of a two-year legislative session, a deal was cut, out of the public eye, and a new plan appeared in the Senate,” Haley wrote in a letter to lawmakers. “It had not been studied. It had not been vetted. ... “So let us all be honest

about what we accomplished in this bill: incremental and incomplete reform or, put a different way, far less than the people of South Carolina both expect and deserve from us.”

While the law allows Haley to appoint DOT commissioners, Haley said the law’s confirmation-and-removal process for commissioners is “deeply flawed.”

The law says that:

- Eight Transportation Department commissioners will be appointed by the governor, one from each congressional district and one at large

- Those appointments will be approved or rejected by the legislative delegations from the affected congressional district

- The appointments then will be screened by the Joint Transportation Review Committee

- The appointments then will be confirmed by the state Senate

- The Transportation Department’s secretary will be selected by the commission with the advice and consent of the Senate

Critics say the proposal is flawed because the governor cannot remove Transportation commissioners without approval from legislators from the affected congressional district.

Also, if legislators do not approve a commissioner’s appointment within 45 days, it is rejected. That allows lawmakers to reject a commissioner without publicly voting, critics say.

Title: **Challenger aims to oust veteran Richland sheriff**

Author: BY GLEN LUKE FLANAGAN AND CLIF LEBLANC gflanagan@thestate.com, cleblanc@thestate.com

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DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY NEXT WEEK

Challenger aims to oust veteran Richland sheriff

Lott has led office 20 years;
Flowers is a former SLED agent

BY GLEN LUKE FLANAGAN
AND CLIF LEBLANC

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After a rough and tumble couple of years as Richland County sheriff, Leon Lott is seeking a sixth term, facing a challenger for the first time in eight years.

Lott has twice tangled publicly with the governor, been the focus of criticism for investigating his own deputies and withstood the glare of the national spotlight when one of his officers was filmed manhandling a disruptive high

school student.

At the same time, the homicide rate has been climbing, and gun and gang violence, escalating – all as scrutiny of police mounts.

Former State Law Enforcement Division agent James Flowers is angling to knock Lott out Tuesday of the office

Lott has held for 20 years – and from the state's largest sheriff's department, where

Lott has worked for 41 years.

Both men are Democrats and there is no Republican challenger in the fall.

At its core, Flowers' campaign is based on offering a fresh face on a candidate with little administrative experience instead of a tested and occasionally bruised veteran with a knack for grabbing headlines.

WHO THEY ARE

Flowers, 43, said he knew in

high school that he wanted to

SEE SHERIFF, 7A

➔ MORE INSIDE

Read The State editorial board's endorsement in the Democratic primary for Richland County sheriff, **PAGE 2C**

➔ ONLINE

THESTATE.COM: Watch video from Tuesday's debate

SHERIFF FROM PAGE 1A

go into law enforcement. His moment of clarity came one night on a rural Georgia road.

He and his dad were driving home in a sporty Pontiac Sunbird convertible after taking Flowers' sister to college. A deputy whipped his cruiser around and pulled them over.

"That single traffic stop changed my life," Flowers said. "Me and my dad got profiled."

Flowers' eyes still flash with resentment over the way the deputy talked to and treated his father, a Norfolk Southern railroad company employee who

was and remains Flowers' hero. "I'm 17. I'm impressionable," Flowers recalls. "The story still pisses me off when I tell it," he said, pausing to control his emotions.

The only explanation the deputy offered as he tossed the license and registration into his father's lap was that he pulled the car because the fog lights were too bright.

"I've always been the guy who had to fight the bully," said the 6-foot-2, now 300-pound former Gamecock defensive end. "I've never been able to sit back and watch injustice."

Flowers accepted a

scholarship in 1991 to play football at the University of South Carolina, where he received a degree in criminal justice. He later took a job at the state Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services while now-Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin was its director. They had met in college.

Flowers joined SLED in 2005 and left last year to challenge Lott. He held a range of positions, including investigator of officer-involved shootings. In October, he launched his first run for elected office, a door-to-door grassroots operation.

Lott, 62, is finishing his

fifth term. If re-elected, he said he plans to run again. "I've demonstrated I can lead this department. I still love every minute of it."

He worked his way through the ranks except for a four-year hiatus after a former sheriff fired him. Lott, a native of Aiken, then took a job as police chief in the Calhoun County town of St. Matthews to get experience as an administrator. He returned to defeat his ex-boss, Allen Sloan, in 1996.

Lott has not faced a serious opponent in each of his four consecutive races. In 2008, he beat his challenger, an African-

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American, in the Democratic primary by taking 81 percent of the vote.

Lott has a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's in criminal justice, both from USC.

He has built an agency with a forensic lab that's internationally accredited, an arsenal of high-tech and military-style equipment, an in-house citizen review panel to watchdog officer misconduct and a range of court-diversion programs for children who might be headed for trouble with the law.

OFFICER-INVOLVED SHOOTINGS

Officer-involved shootings have been a focal point in this election for one reason – the sheriff's department is the only local agency in South Carolina that investigates its own shootings rather than allow SLED to do them.

Lott made the change in 2014, and has come under fire by Gov. Nikki Haley, as well as some legislators who want to make SLED investigations state law.

Flowers supports the way SLED investigates police officers, even though media accounts have questioned their credibility, including allowing police time to collect their thoughts before providing official accounts of a shooting.

Most recently, a series in The Washington Post has challenged whether some S.C. cases were mishandled.

The Post reported that during questioning under oath by a defense attorney, Flowers said that he didn't see a need to go back and review a 2008

officer-involved shooting that killed a Kershaw County woman – which he investigated – before presenting it to prosecutors. The attorney pointed out that the officers said they saw either a muzzle flash or smoke from a rifle they said the woman pointed at them. It turned out to be a BB gun, which does not produce a flash.

The newspaper also challenged Flowers' thoroughness before signing off on his report. Flowers told the defense attorney that he did not read all files in the SLED investigation – such as those detailing fingerprint and firearms data. He said it was sufficient to get a synopsis of each file from agents who compiled them.

In an interview with The State newspaper, Flowers defended his handling of the case, and said it met SLED's standard of quality.

Flowers also criticized a 2007 shooting by a Richland County deputy that he investigated for SLED.

He told The State this week that 5th Circuit Solicitor Dan Johnson took the evidence Flowers compiled and found the deputy did not violate the law. Flowers told the newspaper the evidence supported at least a manslaughter charge.

But a Jan. 11, 2011, letter from the solicitor's office to Flowers shows that the office of then-chief prosecutor Barney Giese cleared the deputy. Johnson was sworn into that position the next day.

Johnson joined the sheriff's department in 2002 and moved up to become Lott's No. 2 deputy in

2008 before being elected solicitor.

"For him to get the details wrong on a shooting that he investigated shows how reckless and lazy he is," Johnson told the newspaper.

Lott argues his department does what many large police agencies do. He said county residents have not objected to his

in-house investigations, mostly because of the trust he has built with them. Further, the department's Citizens' Advisory Council provides scrutiny and transparency, he said.

Despite criticism of SLED's investigations, Flowers said SLED oversight is still the way to go.

"You cannot call yourself transparent when you investigate yourself," Flowers said.

SPRING VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

In October, a school resource officer was caught on video yanking a disruptive student at Spring Valley High School from her seat and slinging her across the room. Two days later, Lott fired the deputy.

Flowers said the sheriff acted too slowly in dumping deputy Ben Fields. "Within 60 seconds, I would have fired the deputy," Flowers said of seeing the student-shot video of the encounter.

Lott counters that he returned from Chicago to review the findings of his internal affairs unit before taking action. The incident also was reviewed by the agency's citizens' review panel, he said.

"What a true leader does is gather all the facts before you make a deci-

sion," Lott said.

MANPOWER AND COST-CUTTING

The sheriff's department has 528 deputies who are sworn officers, including 113 plainclothes investigators, Lott said. Civilian employees and part-timers complete a staff of 815 personnel.

Flowers wants to double or triple the number of deputies on patrol. He said that can be accomplished without a hiring spree or a tax increase.

He proposes to shrink the command staff, which he said is bloated, eliminate the helicopter and airplanes and slash special programs designed to keep teenagers out of trouble.

Flowers said Lott's juvenile diversion programs "hurt, harm and humiliate" teens.

"What I want to do," the challenger said, "is partner with existing public and private programs so that I can use my resources at the sheriff's department to keep people safe."

Lott said the programs were requested by anguished parents, and cited a youth arbitration program as having a 92 per-

- \$43.2 million budget
- 815 employees; 415 are deputies in uniform, 113 are plainclothes investigators, 39 are members of the command staff. The rest are civilian employees, part-timers and reserve deputies who are volunteers.
- 499 employees are white; 209 are African-Americans; 33 are Hispanic or Asian. Tally does not include 74 reserve

Title: **Challenger aimsto oust veteran Richland sheriff**
Author: BY GLENLUKE FLANAGAN AND CLIF LEBLANC gflanagan@thestate.com, cleblanc@thestate.com
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officers who are not paid.

- 5 divisions that include uniform patrols, criminal investigations, special teams, special projects and professional standards.

SOURCE: Richland County Sheriff's Department

**PLANS
FOR FUTURE**

**JAMES FLOWERS
PROPOSES TO:**

- Be proactive about preventing crime
- Bring in outside review of all internal investigations that rise to possible



Flowers



Lott

criminal conduct, including officer-involved shootings

- Move away from the department's internal youth programs to instead partner with outside programs

**LEON LOTT PROPOSES
TO:**

- Continue advancing the department's technology and its forensic science
- Partner more with other police agencies to continue addressing youth and gun violence
- Strengthen neighborhood crime watch groups

cent success rate.

"You could eliminate everything we do here and put everyone on the road," Lott responded. "So when parents call up here and ask for help, we'll tell them, 'No, I won't do that?'"

Reach Flanagan at (803) 771-8305; Reach LeBlanc at (803) 771-8664.

**JAMES
FLOWERS**

- 43, born in Augusta
- Started at S.C. Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services in 1997
- The State Law

Enforcement Division, 2005-15

- First time running for elected office

LEON LOTT

- 62, born in Aiken
- Started at the Richland County Sheriff's Department in 1975
- Elected sheriff in 1996
- Seeking a sixth, four-year term

**SNAPSHOT OF
THE RICHLAND
COUNTY
SHERIFF'S
DEPARTMENT**

Title: **Primary voters to choose candidates in legislature races**
 Author:
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Primary voters to choose candidates in legislature races

Two of the incumbent South Carolina state representatives who have portions of Colleton County in their districts face a primary challenge June 14. A third seat in the House of Representatives will be up for grabs.

There are four state house of representative districts which carve up Colleton County. Only one of the four is assured of a return to office due to the lack of challengers.

St. Rep. Patsy Knight, D-St. George, will return to Columbia to represent the 97th District, which includes a portion of Colleton County near the Cottageville area.

Voters in the state house's 121st District will take the first step toward replacing Kenneth Hodges, who decided late last year that he would not seek re-election.

Democrats within the 121st, which has portions of Beaufort and Colleton County including Walterboro, will be asked to choose between a Walterboro attorney and a St. Helena Island minister when they go to the polls next Tuesday.

Waiting in the wings will be the lone Republican filing for the seat, educator and Walterboro city council member James Broderick. He will face the winner of the Democratic primary in the November General Election.

GREY HOLMES

Grahame Grey Holmes, the Walterboro attorney, will be running for the right to represent the Democrats in the 121st House race.

Holmes was born and raised in Walterboro. He graduated from Clemson University with a bachelor of science in forest resource management in 1997. In 2000 he received his law degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law and a master of studies in environmental law from Vermont Law School.

Since 2003 he has been with the Peters, Murdaugh, Parker, Eltzroth & Detrick law firm.

Holmes has been a board member of The Colleton Center since 2015 and previously served on the Colleton County Board of Zoning Appeals, Colleton County Capital Projects Sales Tax Commission and the Lowcountry Community Action Agency board of directors.

Holmes has said previously, "District 121 needs an advocate who will go to Columbia

and bring home the resources we need to create jobs and improve our infrastructure and schools.

"As a member of the House of Representatives, I will continue to fight to improve the quality of life for all citizens of Beaufort and Colleton counties," he added when announcing his candidacy.

MICHAEL RIVERS SR.

Michael Rivers Sr. is the St. Helena Island minister.

He graduated from Clafin University with a bachelor of science in organizational management and has a certificate in computer-assisted drafting from the Technical College of the Lowcountry and an associate's degree in electronics and computer technology from the DeVry Institute of Technology.

He was elected to the Beaufort County Board of Education in 1999 and has served on the Beaufort County Recreation Commission and the Parks and Leisure Services Board and as president of the St. Helena Branch of the NAACP.

"I decided to run in this (election) season because I believe that we, the people, should have an authentic voice in the statehouse," Rivers said. "A voice that that puts people over politics."

"I plan to continue to fight for education issues and other issues," he added in a statement announcing his candidacy.

90TH DISTRICT

In the 90th District, incumbent Democratic state representative Justin Bamberg of Bamberg County, is being challenged in his bid for re-election by Evert Comer Jr., also an attorney and also from Bamberg County.

The state house district contains portions of Bamberg, Barnwell and Colleton counties.

Bamberg was first elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 2012.

Comer has spent the last six years as a member of Bamberg County Council and previously served as a member of the Bamberg County School Board and a Denmark councilman.

In November's General Election the winner of the Democratic primary will be challenged



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by Republican Dan Lawrence of Colleton County. He was the lone Republican to file a statement of candidacy for the seat.

116TH DISTRICT

In the 116th State House District, incumbent Robert Brown is being challenged in the Democratic primary by Eric L. Mack.

Brown, a resident of Hollywood, has been a member of the state legislature since 2001, before then he served as a member of the Hollywood Town Council.

Mack is the pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Charleston County and is employed as a data coordinator in the radiation department of MUSC in Charleston.

While the Democratic voters in that house district are choosing their candidate, Republicans in the district will also be going to the polls to decide if Carroll O'Neal or Charles Glover Sr. will be their November candidate.

Glover, a minister, made an unsuccessful bid for the mayor of Ravenel in 2015.

O'Neal ran an unsuccessful bid to oust Brown two years ago.

The 116th District includes portions of Colleton and Charleston counties.

COUNTY-WIDE

Republican voters county-wide be asked to chose between incumbent 14th Circuit Solicitor Duffie Stone and Angela McCall-Tanner, also a resident of Beaufort County.

Stone has been the 14th Judicial Circuit Solicitor since January of 2006 and successfully ran for re-election in 2008 and 2012.

Stone is a member of the board of directors of the National District Attorneys Association,

and last year was appointed to the state's Task Force on Domestic Violence by S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley.

Stone received his law degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law.

McCall-Tanner also received her law degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law and was hired as an assistant solicitor by former Solicitor Randolph Murdaugh in 1999.

She left the solicitor's office and spent a year in private practice before being named chief of staff of the Bluffton Police Department.

In 2014 McCall-Tanner was appointed a magistrate judge, a post she left to run for solicitor.

EDISTO BEACH

Republican voters on Edisto Beach will be among those going to the polls to determine if U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford of South Carolina's First Congressional District should keep his seat in Washington, D.C. He is being challenged by Jenny Horne of Dorchester County.

From 2003 to 2011, Sanford served as South Carolina's governor.

Horne, a resident of Summerville, currently serves in the South Carolina House of Representatives for the 94th District. She has been a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives since 2009.

An attorney, she received her law degree from the University of South Carolina.

She is a past president of the South Carolina Women Lawyers Association and was named the YMCA Legislator of the Year in 2010 and was the South Carolina Association of Personal Care Providers Legislator of the Year in 2011.