

Title: **As Obama checked off goals, Democrats really lost ground**
 Author: BY LISALERER Associated Press
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POLITICS

As Obama checked off goals, Democrats really lost ground

BY LISA LERER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON

In boasting about his tenure in the White House, President Barack Obama often cites numbers like these: 15 million new jobs, a 4.9 percent unemployment rate and 74 months of consecutive job growth.

There's one number you will almost never hear: More than 1,030 seats.

That's the number of spots in state legislatures, governor's mansions and Congress lost by Democrats during Obama's presidency.

It's a statistic that reveals an unexpected twist of the Obama years: The leadership of the one-time community organizer and champion of ground-up politics was rough on the grassroots of his own party. When Obama exits the White House, he'll leave behind a Democratic Party that languished in his shadow for years and is searching for itself.

"What's happened on the ground is that voters have been punishing Democrats for eight solid years – it's been exhausting," said South Carolina state Sen. Vincent Sheheen, who lost two gubernatorial campaigns to

Nikki Haley, President-elect Donald Trump's pick for ambassador to the U.N. "If I was talking about a local or state issue, voters would always lapse back into a national topic: Barack Obama."

When Obama won the presidency, his election was heralded as a moment of Democratic dominance – the crashing of a conservative wave that had swept the country since the dawn of the Reagan era.

Democrats believed that the coalition of young, minority and female voters who swept Obama into the White House would usher in something new:

an ascendant Democratic majority that would ensure party gains for decades to come.

The coalition, it turns out, was Obama's alone.

After this year's elections, Democrats hold the governor's office and both legislative chambers in just five coastal states: Oregon, California, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Delaware. Republicans have the trifecta in 25, giving them control of a broad swath of the middle of the country.

The defeats have all but wiped out a generation of

young Democrats, leaving the party with limited power in statehouses and a thin bench to challenge an ascendant GOP majority eager to undo many of the president's policies. To be sure, the president's party almost always loses seats in midterm elections. But, say experts, Obama's tenure has marked the greatest number of losses under any president in decades.

"Obama just figured his important actions on policies like immigration and health care would solidify support, but that hasn't really materialized," said Daniel Galvin, a political science professor at Northwestern University and the author of a book on presidential party building. "He's done basically the minimal amount of party building, and it's been insufficient to help the party."

It's a political reality that Obama has only been willing to acknowledge publicly after his party's devastating November losses. He's admitted he failed to create "a sustaining organization" around the political force that twice elected him to office.

"That's something I would have liked to have

done more of, but it's kind of hard to do when you're also dealing with a whole bunch of issues here in the White House," he said at his year-end press conference.

It is perhaps not surprising that Obama – a politician who promised a post-party era – turned out not to be a party stalwart.

Obama and his aides came into office neither beholden to his party's establishment, nor particularly interested in reinforcing his party's weak spots.

He electrified the 2004 Democratic National Convention with a speech seeking common cause over party differences. Four years later, he defeated Hillary Clinton, the pick of the party insiders, to win the Democratic presidential nomination.

In the White House, Obama's failure to do the typical Washington schmoozing was a constant source of complaint among congressional Democrats, as was his reluctance to endorse down-ballot candidates and inability to parlay Organizing for Action, his grassroots organization, into a significant force.

State parties languished



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He's indicated he intends to make partisan politics a bigger piece of his post-presidential life. Aides say Obama will be

closely involved in an effort to focus on drawing district lines more in the favor of Democrats.

The president's advisers blame the losses on such structural trends. They point to a flood of Republican super PAC dollars and a resurgence of Republican political power in statehouses. That state-level dominance has given Republicans the ability to redraw district lines and created voting rules that could benefit their party for years to come.

The refusal by many Democrats to accept help from Obama in the 2010 and 2014 midterms was also a strategic mistake, they argue.

"Frankly, when people have asked, the president has been more than willing to engage," said David Simas, Obama's political director.

Some Democrats blame Obama for an executive agenda that highlighted social issues – such as transgender rights and access to birth control –

over the economic anxiety still felt by many voters.

"The backlash to the Obama presidency was perhaps bigger than any of us really realized," said Simon Rosenberg, president of the New Democratic Network, a Democratic think tank. "A lot of the story of this election was people feeling like the culture was evolving in a way that made it feel like they were no longer living in the country they grew up in."

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CHARLES DHARAPAK AP

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 Author: BY LUCASHIGH lhigh@islandpacket.com
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BEAUFORT COUNTY

Ready to take your golf cart out at night? Tap the brakes

BY LUCAS HIGH

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It has been six months since state lawmakers passed a measure allowing counties to permit nighttime golf cart usage, but law-abiding Beaufort County cart drivers must still park their rides when the sun goes down.

While municipal leaders in Bluffton, Beaufort and Port Royal have voiced support for legalizing the use of carts at night, safety and traffic concerns were recently raised by Beaufort County Sheriff P.J. Tanner, sending county staff scrambling to draft an ordinance to address

those issues.

The state bill, co-sponsored by Rep. Bill Herbkersman of Bluffton and signed into law in June by Gov. Nikki Haley, allows golf cart drivers to use local roads with speed limits of 35 mph or slower and requires that carts are equipped with front and rear lights to do so.

Besides those stipulations, the law is relatively vague and leaves open the possibility for dangerous driving, critics say.

Many roads that nighttime usage would be allowed on were not de-

signed for golf carts, Tanner said a recent workshop held by the Beaufort County Council's Public Facilities Committee.

"A golf cart is ... a slow-moving hazard," and carts on roadways would create traffic congestion, Tanner said.

"Just because a speed limit is 35 mph or less, doesn't mean that people (in cars) are driving that speed limit," he said. That would could create a dangerous situation where car and truck drivers may get "aggravated and irritated" and swerve to pass slower-

moving carts.

State law also doesn't specify a cut-off time for cart usage, so theoretically, carts could be operated around the clock, he said.

"The chance of someone driving under the influence in the wee hours of the morning is a lot greater, especially around the time when bars start closing and people start going home," Tanner said.

He suggested that, if the county were to pass an ordinance allowing nighttime usage, it should limit

SEE GOLF CARTS, 4A
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GOLF CARTS

driving to the hours prior to midnight.

County Council members appear amenable to such restrictions.

Councilman Tabor Vaux said, "I see this going forward, so the question in my mind is about what we can do to make it safer."

"I'd be in favor of cutting (cart usage) off at midnight," he said.

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"Seat belts, lighting, turn signals — all those things should apply" to golf carts, Tanner said. "That's what we require on your personal vehicles that travel on these same roads."

Any ordinance passed by the county must also have teeth, he added.

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Keaveny said his staff will work in the coming weeks to draft an ordinance that allows nighttime cart driving but also include time restrictions, enhanced safety features and penalties for violations. That ordinance will then be introduced to the Public Facilities Committee before consideration from the full council.

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THERE NEEDS TO BE A PENALTY FOR VIOLATIONS.

Beaufort County Sheriff P.J. Tanner

Title: **CommonCause urges Haley to step aside as governor**
 Author: BY BRISTOW MARCHANT bmarchant@thestate.com
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STATE GOVERNMENT

Common Cause urges Haley to step aside as governor

BY BRISTOW MARCHANT
bmarchant@thestate.com

Government watchdog group Common Cause of South Carolina is asking Gov. Nikki Haley to step aside as governor, saying her pending nomination to become U.N. ambassador impedes her ability to do the job.

In a letter to the governor released Thursday, Common Cause director John Crangle notes, "The process of vetting, security clearance, confirmation, briefing and training for the position of U.N. am-

bassador will require considerable time and effort on your part at a time when the new General Assembly will be convening in January 2017 and considering vital issues."

In light of the timing of Haley's nomination, Crangle asks her if "it would be in the best interests of the people of both South Carolina and the United States if you would take a leave of absence from your position as governor."

"Gov. Haley has found no problems in doing her duties as governor while preparing for her Senate

confirmation process," Haley's spokeswoman, Chaney Adams, said Thursday.

Haley is expected to step down once her position as U.N. ambassador is approved, allowing Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster to take over as the state's chief executive.

It's unclear who would then take over as the state's lieutenant governor. Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, has said he will not rise to fill the post. He could resign and another senator could be elected as the



CLIFF OWEN AP

Haley

Senate leader and then rise to lieutenant governor. However, some argue that, because of changes to the S.C. Constitution, McMaster could appoint his replacement.

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Title: **AS.C. license won't be enough to fly in 2018**
 Author: BY LUCASHIGH lhigh@islandpacket.com
 Size: 58.12 column inches
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TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

A S.C. license won't be enough to fly in 2018

BY LUCAS HIGH

lhigh@islandpacket.com

A South Carolina driver's license will serve you well if you're motoring across the country.

By 2018, not so much if you fly.

Travelers winging their way across the country this holiday season may notice some new airport signs

about the type of identification necessary for boarding.

If you have a South Carolina driver's license, pay attention.

The signs, which the Transportation Security Administration began installing earlier this month, inform fliers that, starting in January 2018, they may need a second form of identification in addition to a state issued driver's license in order to

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IDENTIFICATION

pation of state authority."

In 2007, South Carolina lawmakers passed a bill forbidding the state from complying with the act. Gov. Nikki Haley, who at the time was in the state House of Representatives, voted in favor of the bill.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

The biggest impact of the bill will be felt starting

board a plane.

"Effective Jan. 22, 2018, TSA will only accept state-issued driver's licenses or identification cards if they are issued by a REAL ID compliant state or a non-compliant state with an extension," according to a recent TSA news release.

South Carolina is among nine states that fall squarely in the "non-compliant" category when it comes to the REAL ID Act, according to information from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which oversees the TSA.

WHAT IS THE REAL ID ACT?

Drafted by Congress in the wake the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the REAL ID Act is intended to ensure

driver's licenses are more uniform from state to state and more difficult to forge.

The act, which was signed into law in 2005 by President George W. Bush with the recommendation of the federal 9/11 Commission, provided states with more than a decade to "established minimum security standards for state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards," according to the Department of Homeland Security.

WHY ISN'T MY SOUTH CAROLINA ID COMPLIANT WITH THE ACT?

Rep. Mark Sanford, who was South Carolina's governor when the act was passed, is a vocal oppo-

nent of REAL ID, arguing it is akin to the implementation of a national identification program and violates state and individual privacy rights.

The act "clearly violates the Founders' intent in offering the 10th Amendment, which states that all powers not given to the federal government are given to the people or the states," Sanford said in a statement last month.

Sanford also balked at the cost of implementing the act, saying in the statement that law constitutes "a \$17 billion unfunded federal mandate on states and, if not deferred or stopped, will amount to yet another federal usur-

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www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/identification.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY KIDS?

Essentially nothing. "TSA does not require children under 18 (years old) to provide identification when traveling with a companion within the United States," according to the administration

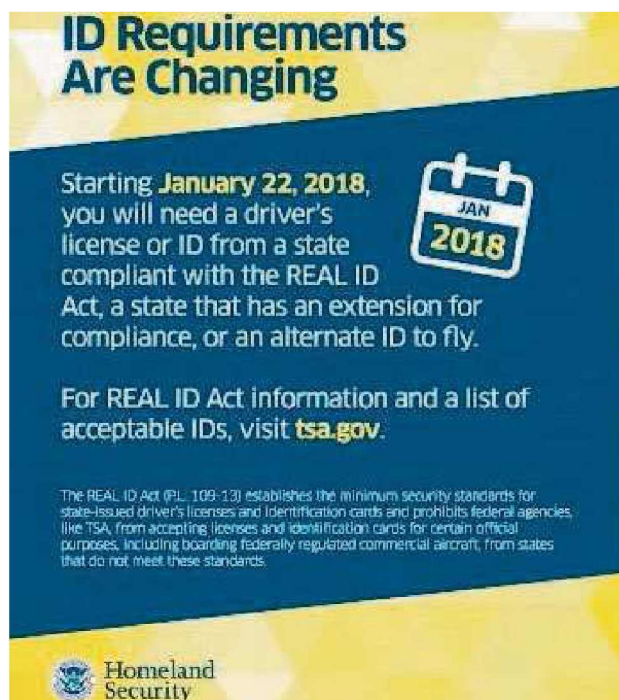
website.

For more information on REAL ID, including a list of frequently asked questions about the act, visit www.dhs.gov/secure-drivers-licenses.

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TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION Submitted

These signs installed inform travelers that in 2018 residents of states not compliant with the REAL ID Act will need ID other than a driver's license in order to fly.

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 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
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Possibility of more S.C. lawmakers charged with corruption looms

BY SEANNA ADCOX
 Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Following the 30-count indictment of a former state House majority leader, questions over who else may face corruption charges will loom over the 2017 legislative session.

The misconduct and ethics charges announced Dec. 14 against 16-year veteran GOP Rep. Jim Merrill — the first since former Speaker Bobby Harrell pleaded guilty and resigned more than two years ago — ended all speculation that lawmakers could breathe easy.

And prosecutor David Pascoe made clear he's not done.

"This is still an ongoing investigation," he said in his Dec. 14 statement.

He repeated that to a judge on Thursday, when Merrill was allowed to remain free from jail without paying a bond.

Merrill, majority leader from 2004 to 2008, is accused of illegally profiting from his position. The indictments allege his public relations and political consulting firm, Geechie Communications, collected more than \$1 million between 2002 and 2016 from clients who hired him because of his office. That includes \$276,600 the GOP cau-

cus paid his company for political mailers and ads.

He's accused of being a lobbyist and sponsoring legislation beneficial to two clients — one of which became law.

Ten of the counts accuse him of not reporting income from clients who lobby state government on 2008-2013 annual campaign disclosure reports.

Merrill adamantly denies doing anything illegal. His attorneys point to opinions issued by the House Ethics Committee and Attorney General Alan Wilson saying it's not illegal for a legislative caucus to hire and pay a majority leader's business.

"For over 20 years, his vocation and livelihood have been in the field of advertising, direct mail, and public relations," their statement said.

But those opinions are just that — nonbinding interpretations of the law. They don't have weight in court.

And Pascoe said Thursday Merrill overcharged the House GOP caucus for work he essentially sent himself. While Merrill told investigators he added a "modest markup," evidence shows it was "more like 50, 75, sometimes over 100 percent," Pascoe said.

Though Wilson handed the Harrell case to Pascoe in 2014,

citing a conflict, it's been just five months since the state Supreme Court gave Pascoe permission to continue. Wilson, a Republican, tried to fire Pascoe, a Democrat, in March, saying he lacked the authority to open a state grand jury to investigate beyond Harrell. The justices disagreed.

"How many other people will be criminally charged before it's all over with?" said John Crangle of Common Cause, who's been pushing for ethics reform for 30 years. "It's hard to predict."

But Crangle said he's heartened to finally see state law enforcement willing to take on Statehouse corruption, rather than leave that to federal prosecutors. A 1990 FBI investigation called Operation Lost Trust resulted in 27 convictions or guilty pleas of state legislators and lobbyists on charges including bribery, extortion and obstruction of justice.

The Legislature passed ethics laws in the operation's wake but left plenty of loopholes that remain decades later.

Two so-called reform laws passed earlier this year — after four years of debate — made few changes. None address lobbying or any other jobs South Carolina's part-time legislators can or can't do.

Some of the accusations

against Merrill are reminiscent of allegations Gov. Nikki Haley successfully sidestepped in 2012, when the then-GOP-dominated House Ethics Committee twice cleared her, and the state Supreme Court ruled that legislators, not courts, should handle citizen complaints against elected representatives.

A late GOP activist had accused Haley of lobbying for two employers while a House member and not reporting the income on campaign disclosures.

But Haley repeatedly argued no law required her to report that money, since her employer had contracts with state agencies, not the House itself. The State Ethics Commission agreed. Haley also argued her work didn't meet the state's legal definition of lobbying.

Another part of Haley's defense was that other legislators do it. Failing to dismiss the complaint, the committee was warned, would open a Pandora's Box.

"Indeed, Gov. Haley's business activities and conduct are commonplace in the Legislature and were always consistent with the law," said her lawyer, Swatti Patel. To find otherwise, she said, would "impugn the integrity" of many other legislators and corporate partners.

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State news briefs

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Her office quickly dismissed the request.

In a letter delivered Thursday, John Crangle with Common Cause said the "process of vetting, security clearance, confirmation, briefing and training" for the Cabinet post

will "require considerable time and effort on your part" as the Legislature launches its 2017 session.

Crangle wants Haley to make Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster acting governor immediately.

Haley spokesman Chaney

Adams said she has "found no problems in doing her duties as governor" while preparing.

Haley said she will resign if the U.S. Senate confirms her. Under the state constitution, McMaster would then become governor.



AP FILE PHOTO/JOHN RAOUX

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley was chosen to serve as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations by President-elect Donald Trump.

Title: **Company adding 100 jobs in Horry County**
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Company adding 100 jobs in Horry County

LORIS — A company that makes air flow measuring devices is expanding its operations in Horry County.

Gov. Nikki Haley's office said in a news release Thursday that Ebtron plans to add 100 jobs over the next five years.

The Loris-based company is expected to spend more than \$2.5 million in the expansion.

Ebtron's products are used for monitoring and maintaining air quality, humidity, climate and other environmental conditions. Its products are used in health care, manufacturing, educational, laboratory and office settings.

The expansion will next to its current operation on U.S. 701 in Loris.