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Haley: Changes being made to fight domestic violence

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Progress is being made in South Carolina's fight against domestic violence, but more time is needed to study the problem and come up with ways to combat it, Gov. Nikki Haley said Thursday.

At a Statehouse news conference, Haley told reporters she signed three new executive orders pertaining to the issue, which was a major topic during last year's legislative session. One would give the South Carolina Domestic Violence Task Force more time to continue finding ways to fight the problem.

Nationwide, South Carolina consistently ranks among the worst states per capita in women killed by men. A year ago, Haley created the task force to come up with systemic, cultural changes to combat the problem.

In August, the panel issued dozens of recommendations, including

training more 911 operators, improving documentation of the crime scene and increasing the number of shelters statewide.



**NIKKI
HALEY**

available resources.

The third order requires Cabinet agencies that regularly screen people for benefits and other assistance to look for domestic violence signs.

In the session that ended last summer, legislators passed a law that increased penalties for domestic violence convictions and gave prosecutors more options for punishment.

Another order would direct Cabinet agencies to change human resources policies to provide more guidance on how to handle employees who may be affected by abuse, such as providing them with leave and

On Thursday, flanked by prosecutors from across the state and other members of the task force, Haley said the panel is "going too good to stop" and needs more time past the Dec. 31, 2015, deadline originally set up in her order that created it.

Haley also said her executive budget for the coming year would allocate funding to help combat the problem, including about \$19 million to fund new prosecutors to handle domestic violence cases, many of which are now prosecuted by law enforcement officers, who are often going up against privately funded attorneys on the defense side.

"I was mortified when I learned that it was law enforcement who were prosecuting these cases," Haley said.

Several professional licensing boards in the state have committed to include domestic violence training in their continuing education courses, Haley said.

Title: **Addressing our state's shrinking rural areas**
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■ WHAT OTHERS SAY

Addressing our state's shrinking rural areas

The following is the opinion of the newspaper represented and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Index-Journal.

Lowcountry residents are unlikely to be surprised that South Carolina's population is growing. Mount Pleasant, Charleston and Summerville are all attracting so many new residents that they struggle with how to provide roads and schools to meet the increased needs.

But in many rural parts of the state, population is shrinking, and their economies are shrinking too.

New Census Bureau data show that South Carolina overtook Alabama in population during the 12 months ending July 1.

Our population now is the 23rd largest in the country. Most of the growth is from people moving here. The rest is from the birth rate.

But in 13 S.C. counties the number of deaths is exceeding births. In Allendale, for example, the population shrank by 7 percent during that same period. And along with a declining population comes less tax money to fund schools, less incentive for new business and industry to move in, and less likelihood that young adults will stay in their rural hometowns because jobs are scarce.

Studies have also shown that shrinking towns have lower educational attainment — and poorer schools. And more health problems — and fewer options for medical care.

The S.C. Supreme Court's recent decision requiring the Legislature to come up with a plan

to improve education in the state's poorest rural counties reflects just how severe that disparity is.

Gov. Nikki Haley is to be commended for recognizing that rural areas need assistance. In addition to designating additional funds for rural schools, she has worked to direct new business and industry to small towns that need jobs — and reasons for people to move in, not out.

And several programs at the Medical University of South Carolina provide remote health care for people in rural areas without enough specialized doctors.

Unfortunately, the charming old homes of many small towns and pastoral beauty of rural areas have yet to attract many new residents. And without growth, planners predict that distressed communities will continue to dry up.

That is a hardship for residents and a threat to the well-being of the state. It is also another drain on infrastructure as people have to travel miles and miles to find work, see doctors and do their shopping.

One advance that could help both urban and rural areas would be better public transit connecting hubs to each other and connecting regions as well.

The Commerce Department must continue to lead the effort bringing new investment and jobs to rural South Carolina.

— Jan. 4, *The Post and Courier*

Why S.C.'s legislative session should be much, much shorter

Editorialists and commentators have chastised the South Carolina legislature relentlessly for failing to get anything done during the 2015 session. In fact, though, they did plenty of work.

This year our Legislature met from January to July, and during that time 1,336 bills were filed between the House and Senate. Of those, 131 were passed by lawmakers. In addition, 950 resolutions were filed, and all but 64 of those passed.

The question, of course, is this: How many of these were actually worth legislators spending over half a year in Columbia?

The length of South Carolina's legislative session has consequences. Studies have found that professional, full-time legislatures are more prone to pressure from lobbyists — and this translates into higher spending and more favors for special interests.

Consider this year's attempt to deal with roads. There are two ways to devote new revenue to roads: raise taxes or cut spending. But lobbyists — in this case, lobbyists working for companies and industries that would benefit from additional spending on roads — aren't going to urge lawmakers to pay for new road projects by cutting other parts of government. They're going to urge tax hikes. And thanks to South Carolina's long legislative session, they had plenty of time to do it. In the end, thanks to citizen groups raising the alarm, they weren't successful. That's a

rarity, unfortunately, and tax hike supporters are sure to be back in January.

According to one media account, toward the end of session legislative leaders even tried to prevent the Board of Economic Advisers from publicizing a revenue surplus, presumably on the grounds that a surplus would undermine the argument for a tax hike. That simply couldn't have happened without a lengthy session.

Or take ethics reform. The year began with a few good proposals, but the longer they sat in committees, the longer lawmakers had to water them down or amend them with insidious provisions. A bill to reform the state's Freedom of Information law gained a provision allowing government agencies to take citizens to court for filing "frivolous" FOIA requests. A bill to require elected officials to disclose their sources of income eventually included a provision loosening requirements on disclosing government income. And so on. The longer the session went on, in other words, the more pointless these bills became.

Or consider the debate over the bond bill. House lawmakers introduced a bill to issue bond debt and use the money for a variety of largely unnecessary projects connected to state colleges and universities. It would have been difficult for lawmakers to pass such a controversial bill within the confines of a short session. As it was, though, they were able to introduce the bill; then

take it off the floor when the Policy Council and (separately) the Gov. Haley raised objections; then find ways to pay for the new projects through the General Fund; and then spend much of the rest of the session trying to figure out how to pass the bond bill anyway, which they were almost able to do.

In short: our excessively long session gave the State House complex — lawmakers, lobbyists, consultants, various special interests — plenty of time to weaken reform, make tax hikes more likely, and spend every last available dime of revenue.

What should a session-shortening bill look like? A sensible reform would be to mandate an end to sessions by the second Friday in April, making each one last roughly 90 calendar days, and holding session every two years. This would encourage lawmakers to use their time — and our money — more wisely.

Members of the House argue that they pass a bill every session to shorten session but Senate ignores it. That may be technically true, but this year, anyway, the bill they passed was anemically weak. The House of Representatives passed a bill that cut a mere ten days off session. The Senate's bill would have shortened session by three months. It wasn't passed, but at least it was worthy of passing.

Our legislature's job is to ensure that citizens' rights are protected. After they do that, they should go home. More time leads to more mischief.

Cecilia Brown works as a research assistant at TheNerve.org and its parent organization, the S.C. Policy Council.

Cecilia Brown

TheNerve.org

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Tax coming, Amazon 'not leaving'

BY ROB COTTINGHAM
cottinghamrob@yahoo.com

"We're not leaving."
That's the sentiment being shared by Amazon in regards to its Cayce location.

"Same answer as last time — no change," said Kelly Cheeseman, spokesperson for Amazon.

With the internet retail giant's in-state tax-exemption status soon to expire, many locals have been worried for months that Amazon would leave once the tax was applied.

Even Gov. Nikki Haley once shared her concern that Amazon would be leaving.

"I talked with Rick Perry," Haley said in February 2015, "and he said we're going to lose Amazon."

The basis of Perry's statement stems from an incident that occurred in Texas, when legislators decided to apply a tax to an

Amazon location that had not been told it should be paying.

When the state of Texas sent a tax bill for \$269 million to the company, Amazon left.

The \$269 million bill was for past-due taxes, taxes that weren't being applied when the company began operations in the Lone Star State.

In the Palmetto State, however, legislators and Amazon made an up-front agreement that the retailer would have a tax exemption status until January 2016 — next month.

In response to Haley's concerns, Cheeseman responded that same month, explaining Amazon's position.

"We are proud to operate in South Carolina and have no plans to leave," she said in the Feb. 12, 2015, edition of *the Chronicle*. "We are not seeking an exten-

sion of the sales tax exemption law; to the contrary, we are seeking enactment this year of federal legislation that would allow tax collection on all sales into South Carolina."

Amazon currently employs more than 2,500 full-time employees in its South Carolina facilities and has offered appealing wages and benefits.

"...we created hundreds of full-time jobs in the state last year that pay 30% higher than traditional retail jobs and offer a comprehensive benefits package starting on day one of employment, including company stock awards, bonuses and health benefits," Cheeseman said. "We look forward to continue creating great, full-time jobs in the communities where we have fulfillment centers."



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Farmers seek help from governor for flood losses

By Gee Atkinson
Editor

Lee County Observer, Bishopville, SC

South Carolina farmers packed the Statehouse last week, imploring Gov. Nikki Haley to ask Congress for money to offset their estimated \$376 million in losses from last month's unprecedented flooding.

But the Republican governor said farmers should have federally subsidized crop insurance. Her office said under-insured farmers shouldn't be bailed out.

Rep. Grady Brown added his voice to the chorus of legislators who have expressed their disappointment in the governor's refusal to change her position.

"I oppose your decision to not support our state's farmers and am disappointed in your lack of compassion toward an industry that does so much good for our great state," Brown said in a letter written to the governor on Dec. 8. "Agriculture has been struck by not just one natural disaster this year, but a multitude."

Haley has asked the state's congressional delegation for \$140

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million to help homeowners, many of whom had no flood insurance. Her request did not include any direct aid for farmers. Instead, she asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture to expedite insurance payments to farmers.

"The governor does not believe we should treat farmers differently than any other business owner in South Carolina," said her spokeswoman Chaney Adams.

South Carolina agriculture and forestry have an annual economic impact of \$41.7 billion and support 212,000 jobs in our state, Brown said.

"You are aware of this because you helped unveil the results of the study releasing these numbers in February," Brown said in his letter to the governor. "How can you simply ignore an industry that has this large of an impact on South Carolina?"

GOP Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers and Republican legislators have also criticized the governor's stance on farm aid. A Senate panel studying the storm's cost voted unanimously before the farmers' news conference to send Haley a letter urging her to change her mind.

Weathers said even for farmers who had insurance, payments won't come anywhere close to covering farmers' losses.

"If every farm in South Carolina had picked the best crop insurance options available, the insurance proceeds still would not cover the basic cost of putting that acre of corn, cotton, soybeans in the ground," Weathers told the Senate panel.

Lee County's Clemson Extension Agent David DeWitt

has said farmers' losses have continued after the initial October flooding.

"Their crops have rotted in the field because we had more rain and the ground never dried up enough to let them get back into the field to harvest their crops," he said.

The estimated losses include \$330 million worth of crops destroyed or damaged in the field at harvest time and \$46 million in winter crops that can't be planted, Weathers said.

Weather's said a request for additional funding for farmers in the federal budget won't be seriously considered without Haley's backing.

Brown said South Carolina farmers need help and they

need it now. "Even with crop insurance coverage, countless farmers in our state are still threatened by possible bankruptcy," he said. "Not only are farmers not able to pay their bills now, but they will not have money to buy seeds to plant crops in the spring."

This means millions of dollars lost, not only for these farmers, but for South Carolina's economy.

"This means food will no longer be produced in our state and we will have to look to other states to support us," Brown said. "This means the end of many family farms in our state."

Brown said farms are different than other small businesses.

"Farmers can not pick up and move to a new field like a small business owner can do," he said. "The agricultural industry does not work like many other industries."

State Farm Bureau Presi-

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dent Harry Ott, elected to the job this month, said most of the state's 25,000 farmers have been affected by the flooding. He said farm loans are coming due Dec. 31, and the banks will start sending out unpaid notices in January.

Ott said without the request-

ed federal assistance there will be "family farms foreclosed on and generational farmers will find themselves with their property sold on the steps of the courthouse."

DeWitt said farmers have taken several hits this year. "First we had a drought in the summer and then we were hit with historic flooding. Now

they're still trying to harvest what's left of their crops and the longer it stays in the field, the less it's worth--the quality is less and less."

Brown said if ever South Carolina's farmers needed help, this is the year. He begged the governor to reconsider her stance on requesting federal aid.

"Our governor has said 'Our farmers know we continue to have their backs and we are going to keep South Carolina on the move,'" he said. "Why don't you (Haley) have their backs now?..Give our farmers the assistance they deserve." }

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¹⁴⁸ 13 nonprofits receive One SC Relief Fund grants

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The One SC Flood Relief Fund, a fund created to provide flood relief for nonprofits, has announced \$500,000 in grants to South Carolina nonprofits to support their flood recovery projects in hard-hit areas.

Among the 13 organizations receiving grants are Sumter United Ministries and South Carolina United Methodist Church in Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton and Sumter counties. According to a One SC news release, projects provided by the nonprofits range from mold remediation to complete home rebuilding. The participating nonprofits will be providing volunteer labor and

an additional \$2.5 million in financial support for the projects.

"We've asked the people of South Carolina to step up, and what we've seen so far is the best in our state — but there's more work to be done," Gov. Nikki Haley said. "If you were blessed and did not have damage to your home, if you were blessed and able to get back into a safe place, pay it forward. Give whatever you can to support the One SC Flood Relief Fund."

One of the grantees helping the state recover is the Mennonite Disaster Service team. Members of the team arrived in South Carolina on Oct. 12, one week after the flooding. The team is reportedly establishing permanent work

camps to host about 900 volunteers from across the U.S. and Canada who will build an estimated 70 homes during the next year, with their first project in Andrews.

"MDS tries to find and meet the people who do not have resources to do the repairs themselves," said Larry Stoner, a disaster relief coordinator for the Mennonite service. "Through All Hands Volunteers, another volunteer disaster recovery group on the ground in South Carolina, we were introduced to Andrews, a community that desperately needed help from clean-up to rebuild. We were also introduced to Trinity United Methodist Church, a church that is providing temporary housing to our volunteers."

The grant recipients were selected by a committee made up of representatives from four Community Foundations representing the 24 Federal Emergency Management Administration designated emergency counties, business and civic leaders.

"The One SC Flood Relief Fund was established after October's devastating floods to help bridge the funding gap in order to rebuild our state," said JoAnn Turnquist, president and CEO of Central Carolina Community Foundation. "The nonprofit organizations receiving grants will help more than 350 households resume their lives. We are grateful for their help."



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\$300M in grant money may be included in early omnibus bill

BY JIM HILLEY
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A version of the 2016 Omnibus Spending Bill published by U.S. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan includes a provision for \$300 million in Community Development Block Grant money "related to disaster relief, long-term recovery, restoration of infrastructure and housing, and economic revitalization in the most impacted and distressed areas ... related to the consequences of Hurricane Joaquin and adjacent storm systems, Hurricane Patricia and other flood events."

While the language in the final bill may change, the funding may not be adequate to cover Gov. Nikki Haley's request for \$140 million for housing repairs and the needs of South Carolina farmers as well, said South Carolina Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Clint Leach.

"It's our understanding that Sen. Lindsay Graham as a member of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee requested \$450 million in total in CDBG

grant funds," Leach said. "What we were told is that they didn't do the entire \$450 million, but they did \$300 million."

Leach said that if you take \$140 million for housing needs Haley requested off the total, it remains a question what might remain for agriculture in the Palmetto State.

The governor requested funds for housing, but refused to request funds to help farmer saying they should be treated no different from any other business.

Besides Hurricane Joaquin, the \$300 million would also cover damage from Hurricane Patricia in Texas and other flood damage, according to the language of the bill.

"Since CDBG is a funding pot that any state can apply for, it is open for anybody, so we are trying to figure out if it is possible to make the funding specific to South Carolina," Leach said. "There are more questions than answers at this point."

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Newsome enters S.C. Highway Patrol

JOAN YATES

Editor

Joshua R. Newsome of Cheraw was one of 40 troopers who graduated from Highway Patrol Basic Class 97 last week and entered the ranks of the South Carolina Highway Patrol.

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley addressed the graduates.

"I think it is so incredibly important to honor what you have gone through and to talk to you about being part of the South Carolina team," Gov. Haley said.

"With that uniform comes a lot of power. You can't demand respect; you have to earn respect. You are someone that everyone needs to trust. You are the good guys ... I saw that firsthand as we went through three tragedies this past year."

Basic 97 brings the total number of troopers in South Carolina to 772. An additional class will report to the academy in January to begin the 98th Basic Class. The troopers began training July 19 and graduated from the Criminal Justice Academy on Oct. 30. An additional five pre-certified officers joined Oct. 18.

The candidates continued with specialized training from the highway patrol in all areas of law enforcement. The SCHP Basic Training



Contributed

Joshua R. Newsome was one of 40 troopers who graduated from the Highway Patrol Basic Class 97 and entered the ranks of the S.C. Highway Patrol.

Program consists of 21 weeks of extensive law enforcement training in-residence. After graduation, troopers must complete a minimum of 400 hours of field training.

"As law enforcement faces increasingly varied and complex challenges, we are pleased to welcome this new class of men and women who are well-trained and ready to meet those challenges," said SCDPS director Leroy Smith.

Troopers are assigned to areas based upon population, calls for service, and the number of licensed drivers/registered vehicles in an area.

"Today, we welcome 40 troopers to our ranks, and as we do, we encourage them to remember the foundation and legacy of those who came before them," said Highway Patrol Col. Mike Oliver. "It is a privilege to wear this uniform and serve the great State of South Carolina."

Newsome received the Capt. Cecil Dilworth Marksmanship Award, which is presented to the trooper who had the best marksmanship during firearms training. He is a son of Harry and Beth Nicholson Newsome of Cheraw and has been assigned to Chesterfield and Lancaster counties.

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Valentines for Vets
Starting Jan. 1, the American

Heritage Girls Troop SC9212 will be collecting boxes of Valentine's Day cards and/or heart lollipop candy donations to help their annual Valentines For Veterans Service Project. Last year, the troop was recognized with a letter from Gov. Nikki Haley for their efforts of making over 1,400 valentines for Veterans in the Lowcountry area. If you would like to help with their project, you can send donations of cards and/or candy to Palmetto Land Baptist Church on Tuesday nights at 6:30 p.m. starting in January. Or mail to: AHG Troop SC9212, 114 Tomaka Drive, Summerville, SC 29483. This is our fourth year with this project, and we have sent more than 2,000 cards.



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