

Title: **George W. Bush in S.C. to stump for brother Jeb**
 Author: JULIE PACE AP White House Correspondent
 Size: 98.11 square inch
 Orangeburg, SC Circulation: 20345



George W. Bush in S.C. to stump for brother Jeb

Ex-president offers tough Trump takedown in campaign debut

JULIE PACE

AP White House Correspondent

CHARLESTON — George W. Bush never mentioned Donald Trump. But with his folksy touch, the former president unleashed a tough takedown Monday of the billionaire businessman who has upended a Republican Party his family has long led.

“I understand Americans are angry and frustrated,” Bush said during his first campaign rally for his brother, Jeb Bush. “But we do not need somebody in the Oval Office who mirrors and inflames our anger and frustration.”

Trump’s rise has confounded the Bush family and its allies. But despite months of predicting the brash billionaire would fade, it’s Jeb Bush whose White House hopes are in peril, particularly if he’s unable to pull out a strong showing in Saturday’s South Carolina primary.

The former president emerged from his self-imposed political hibernation to try to give Bush a boost. He layered each validation of his younger brother with an implicit critique of Trump.

He urged voters to back a candidate who will be “measured

and thoughtful” on the world stage. A candidate whose “humility” helps him understand what he doesn’t know. A candidate who can win in November’s general election.

“All the sloganeering and all the talk doesn’t matter if we don’t win,” Bush said. “We need somebody who can take a positive message across the country.”

With his brother as a strong warm-up act, Jeb Bush delivered an impassioned version of his campaign speech, touting his experience as Florida governor and vowing he could put Republicans back in the White House for the first time in eight years.

“I can beat Hillary Clinton,” he said of the Democratic front-runner. “I can promise you that.”

The former president’s return to presidential politics has been met with blistering attacks from Trump about the unpopular Iraq war and the economic recession that began at the end of his administration. Trump has also repeatedly reminded voters that the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks happened on Bush’s watch.

“If the ex-president is campaigning for his brother, I think he’s probably open to great scrutiny, maybe things that haven’t been thought of in the past,” Trump told reporters Monday.

Rather than gloss over 9/11, Bush leaned in. As the crowd fell into a hushed silence, he recounted in detail his whereabouts on the morning of the attacks and praised the troops that served in the two wars he started in response.

“Your most solemn job as voters is to elect a president who understands the reality of the threats we face,” he said.

As he praised South Carolina’s Republican Gov. Nikki Haley, the daughter of Indian-born parents, Bush pointedly said, “Thank goodness our country welcomed her parents when they immigrated here in 1969.”

It was a reminder of how much the Republican Party has changed since he was president. While Bush championed failed legislation that would have provided a pathway to citizenship for millions of people in the U.S. illegally, many current GOP

presidential candidates have fought to outdo each other with tough enforcement policies, even mass deportations.

Jeb Bush spent months trying to figure out what role, if any, his brother might play in his campaign. The 43rd president left office deeply unpopular with a nation fatigued by the Iraq War and angry over his botched response to Hurricane Katrina. He’s also a reminder to voters eager to break with the political establishment that Jeb Bush would be the third man from his family to serve as president.

But South Carolina is a state that has long been friendly to the Bush family. Presidents George W. Bush and George H.W. Bush each won two Republican primaries in the state, and their family retains deep social and political ties here.

Pete and Tisha Petersen were among the Bush family fans who attended Monday’s rally. Neither is sure who they’ll vote for in Saturday’s primary, and

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Bush

From A1

both said the former president's return to the campaign trail has indeed rekindled memories of the Iraq war and the economic recession.

But Tisha Petersen said that, "for people who love the Bush family, I think it's not such a bad thing either. It shows loyalty." And her husband said that with

Jeb Bush struggling to get traction, he may not have had any other choice but to campaign with his brother.

"Jeb doesn't quite have that edge that his brother had," he said. "Maybe his brother will give him a little bit of that."

George W. Bush has kept a low profile since leaving the White House in early 2009. He retreated to his home state of Texas, where he picked up painting and

worked on various projects.



Republican presidential candidate and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, accompanied by his brother former President George W. Bush and George's wife Laura Bush, takes the stage during a campaign stop Monday in North Charleston. ^{AP}



Title: **Establishment can't stop Trump**

Author:

Size: 47.27 square inch

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Establishment can't stop Trump

STEVE PEOPLES

The current and former chiefs of the state Republican Party condemned him. New Hampshire's only two Republican members of Congress refused to endorse him. The conservative owner of the state's largest newspaper called him "a con man" on the front page.

Donald Trump won anyway — big time.

So, too, did Bernie Sanders, who left New Hampshire with the commanding victory one might expect of a front-runner blessed with the near universal favor of his party. Except all that establishment support belongs to Hillary Clinton.

Trump's 18-point victory and the self-described democratic socialist's 21-point win are reminders of the limits of party power in an age of anger toward Washington and frustration with politics.

Many Republican Party leaders may be terrified by Trump's ascendance but have yet to divine a way to stop the billionaire real estate mogul. Clinton may have all the endorsements of her party's bold-faced names, but it is Sanders who is winning over the young people and independents who helped push Barack Obama to the White House.

On Tuesday, establishment-minded Republicans from New Hampshire expressed a mix of frustration and shame that it was their state that delivered Trump's first victory. "I refuse to support him under any circumstance," said Fergus Cullen, a former New Hampshire Republican Party chairman. "Trump would be a disaster."

Cullen likened Trump to Pat Buchanan in 1996, the divisive former Nixon aide and conservative commentator who also won the New Hampshire

primary. GOP leaders quickly coalesced behind mainstream alternative Bob Dole, the former Republican Senate leader who went on to win the nomination.

It wasn't because they loved Dole, Cullen said, but because they feared Buchanan would embarrass the Republican Party.

"The party was able to stop Buchanan 20 years ago," Cullen said. "Today, they're incapable of doing it."

For those like Cullen who oppose Trump, it only gets worse.

Marco Rubio's underwhelming performance in New Hampshire eliminates the prospect the Florida senator might emerge as the Republican establishment's favored alternative as the race heads to South Carolina and the Super Tuesday states.

Competing for the support of the same group of Republicans, Ohio Gov. John Kasich, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and Rubio won enough votes combined to handily beat Trump. But as they fought among themselves — four political insiders against the lone outsider — Trump won with ease.

John Jordan, a California winery owner who runs an outside group backing Rubio, said that "candidate logjam is all going to break in one night," and suggested that night will be March 15, when Florida is among the states to hold their presidential primaries.

"One of them will do better than the other, and it will be impossible for the relative loser to make the case to donors that he should continue," he said, referring to the state's native sons, Bush and Rubio. "Donors will

simply move to whoever wins that state, and it will happen nearly instantly."

But between now and March 15 is South Carolina, Nevada and the more than a dozen states that vote on March 1 — time that Trump, and Sen. Ted Cruz, can use to further their edge. Despite questions about the strength of his ground game, Trump continues to hold a commanding lead in many preference polls in the South's first primary — and he could get a bump from his New Hampshire success.

In South Carolina, Trump isn't likely to find any GOP leaders eager to embrace his campaign.

Senior Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham has said that choosing between Trump and Cruz is like choosing between being "shot or poisoned." South Carolina GOP Chairman Matt Moore lashed out at Trump's plan to temporarily ban Muslims from the United States as un-American and unconstitutional.

And South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley called on Republicans to resist the temptation to follow "the siren call of the angriest voices," referring to Trump.

Yet even before New Hampshire results were final, Moore declined to condemn Trump when given the opportunity — a clear attempt not to alienate his supporters.

"Trump is holding rallies and drawing crowds like we've never seen, which is really impressive," Moore told The Associated Press. "Clearly he's brought a lot of new people into the fold. We'll need those people to defeat Hillary Clinton."

Steve Peoples reports for The Associated Press.

Title: **House bill provides \$40M in aid to flood-devastated S.C. farmers**
 Author: SEAN N A ADCOX Associated Press
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House bill provides \$40M in aid to flood-devastated S.C. farmers

SEANNA ADCOX
Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina farmers devastated by last fall's flooding could get up to \$40 million in state aid to stay afloat under legislation advanced Wednesday to the House floor.

The legislation approved 21-0 by the Ways and Means Committee allows farmers in disaster-declared counties to apply for grants of up to \$100,000 each. The grants could equal 20 percent of a farmer's total loss.

"We can't make them whole," Chairman Brian White, R-Anderson, said of his bill. "This may not be everything they want but it's something to keep the industry going."

Last October's torrential rains wiped out \$330 million worth of crops at harvest time. Farmers lost an additional \$45 million because they couldn't plant winter crops in bogs, according to the state Department of Agriculture. Those figures don't include losses from last year's spring freeze and summer drought.

Farmers essentially lost their entire inventory after incurring a year's worth of expenses, leaving many unable to pay operating loans that came due Dec. 31. Hopefully, next season's harvest will be profitable, but many family farms won't survive in the meantime, said State Farm Bureau President Harry Ott.

About 30 percent of farm loans through the Farm Service Agency in South Carolina are already delinquent, he said.

"We were totally exposed and had an event nobody could plan for," Ott, the House's former minority leader, told the committee. "The only way out of this quagmire is to put a crop in the ground and plant it forward."

The measure is meant to provide a revenue bridge so farmers aren't forced to literally sell the farm. It specifies the grant can't be used to pay down debt. Instead, it must be spent on seeds, fertilizer and other expenses toward planting this year's crops.

"It helps them on the back side and helps grow the economy," since farmers will be spending money that keeps local supply stores open, said Rep. Kenny Bingham, R-Cayce. "It's not going to do any good just to pay off bankruptcy debt."

Legislators said some have already given up on farming. Rep. Alan Clemmons, R-Myrtle Beach, said that includes a sixth-generation farmer in his area.

Legislators in both chambers and parties have said the state needs to help farmers survive.

In December, hundreds of farmers packed the Statehouse to beg Gov. Nikki Haley to ask for federal money to offset losses. But the Republican governor has refused, saying farmers shouldn't be treated differently than other businesses beyond what's already available, such as subsidized flood insurance.

But GOP Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers has said even farmers who paid for the most insurance avail-

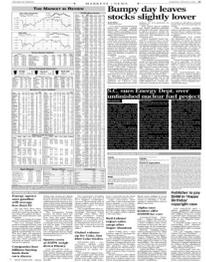
able didn't recoup enough money to even cover what it cost them to plant the crops. Flood insurance for farms is far more complicated than insurance for homes and other businesses, and a change in the last federal farm bill means farmers are no longer eligible for other disaster aid, he's explained.

The bill's \$40 million would come from state surpluses, so the money would not have to wait on the budget process.

But that doesn't mean help will come quickly. The House will take up the bill in two weeks, following next week's furlough. The bill could then stall in the Senate. If it passes, a board the measure creates to evaluate applications and dole out the grants has 20 days to hold its first meeting.

Ott said ideally the money would be available in March, when corn planting begins. But supply stores should be willing to extend short-term credit to farmers if they know the money's coming, he said.

Title: **S.C. sues Energy Dept. over unfinished nuclear fuel project**
 Author: MEG KINNARD Associated Press
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S.C. sues Energy Dept. over unfinished nuclear fuel project

MEG KINNARD
Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina has again sued the federal government over an unfinished project to convert nuclear weapons components into reactor fuel, saying in a lawsuit filed Tuesday that the administration has acted unconstitutionally in failing to complete the mixed-oxide facility by a Jan. 1 deadline.

“The federal government has a responsibility to follow through with its promises,” state Attorney General Alan Wilson said in a statement provided to The Associated Press. “The Department of Energy has continually shown disregard for its obligations under federal law to the nation, the state of South Carolina and frankly the

rule of law.”

Federal officials declined to comment on active litigation.

The program is intended to turn weapons-grade plutonium into commercial nuclear reactor fuel to fulfill a nonproliferation deal with Russia. Under the agreement, Russia and the U.S. agreed to dispose of at least 34 metric tons apiece of weapons-grade plutonium, enough material for about 17,000 nuclear warheads, which would then be turned into commercial nuclear reactor fuel.

The project at the Savannah River Site, along the South Carolina-Georgia border, is years behind schedule and billions over its original budget. Because the facility wasn’t operational by a Jan. 1 deadline,

the federal government was supposed to remove 1 metric ton of plutonium from South Carolina or pay fines of \$1 million a day for “economic and impact assistance” — up to \$100 million yearly — until either the facility meets production goals or the plutonium is taken elsewhere for storage or disposal.

The suit also seeks daily fines of \$1 million and the plutonium removal.

The lawsuit has been expected. Last month, Gov. Nikki Haley told Wilson that she wanted to sue, also warning Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz in December that the state would be forced to sue if his agency didn’t start making payments. A clause in the law, however, makes the fine “subject to the availability of appropriations.”



Title: **S.C. domestic violence gun law hard to track**
 Author: JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press
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S.C. domestic violence gun law hard to track

JEFFREY COLLINS

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina lawmakers passed a law last year banning some people convicted of domestic violence from owning guns.

But the state's antiquated court records system could prevent advocates from tracking how it is working.

Last year, Democrats and Republicans came together to pass the law giving a lifetime gun ban for the worst abusers and an automatic three- or 10-year ban in other serious cases.

But in the least serious third-degree domestic violence cases, whether someone convicted of the crime can keep or buy guns is left

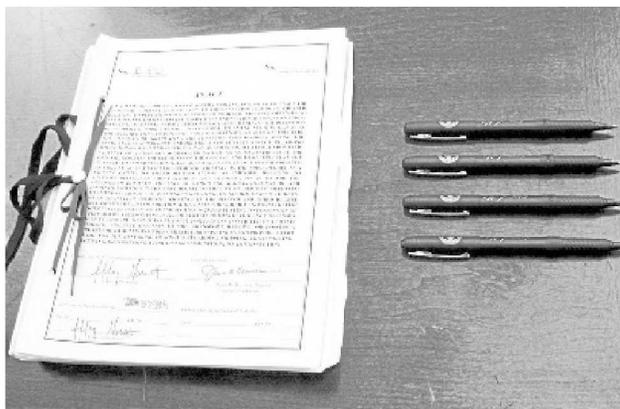
up to the judge. Advocates fighting domestic violence want to know how often a judge rules to take away guns, but is struggling to collect data, said Sara Barber, executive director of the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

"We can't tell how well the law is working if we can't tell how judges are using their discretion," Barber said.

A domestic violence task force created by Gov. Nikki Haley determined that 62 percent of domestic violence cases in South Carolina end with a not guilty verdict. But the database is so disjointed,

that it is impossible to know if the defendants in those cases were found not guilty, accepted a plea bargain to a lesser charge or the charges were dropped. It is also difficult to sort the data by a criminal charge without a defendant's name.

"When the governor signs a bill it isn't over," Barber said. "A lot of times implementation is the tougher part."



AP

In this June 4, 2015 photo, pens are placed beside South Carolina's new domestic violence bill before Gov. Nikki Haley signs it into law on in Columbia. The new law increases penalties for domestic violence and has a gun ban for abusers.

Title: **Calhoun students get handheld computer devices**
 Author: LARRY R JORDAN T&D Correspondent
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Calhoun students get handheld computer devices

LARRY P. JORDAN

T&D Correspondent

ST. MATTHEWS — The distribution of handheld computer devices to hundreds of students in the Calhoun County School District marked “a historical day” for the county, Superintendent Dr. Steve Wilson said during the school board’s Jan. 25 meeting.

The district purchased 1,000 devices to assist students in third grade and above with their classwork, Wilson said. He said there were enough left over to also issue them to students in grades K-2.

Resident Michael Lee during public comments asked the board if the annual \$50 fee each student will pay for use of the computers would include insurance on the devices. Officers assured Lee the computers are insured.

Also during the meeting, Sky Strickland, the district’s chief financial officer, reported the district had collected \$65 million in property tax revenue as of the end of December 2015. She noted, however, that the district had lost \$150,000 in state funding.

In his report, Wilson presented the revised 2015-16 school year calendar reflecting lost days as a result of last year’s flooding that must be made up. The revised calendar is as follows:

- Make-up days — Feb. 12 and Oct. 23, 2016
- Feb. 22, 2016 — Interim reports issued
- April 5, 2016 — Report cards issued

■ March 24, 2016 — 4th quarter begins

■ May 5, 2016 — Interim reports issued

■ June 2, 2016 — Reports cards issued

■ June 2, 2016 — Quarter ends

■ Total days in session — 180

Wilson noted that the schedule could change if other days are lost this school year.

The superintendent also discussed Gov. Nikki Haley’s K-12 Education Reform Initiative, noting it provides \$230 million for rural transportation, an additional \$65 million for empowering families and an additional \$19.2 million to increase the minimum pay of bus drivers from \$7.46 per hour to \$10.96 per hour.

In other business:

■ Calhoun County High School senior Luis Nunez was recognized for winning the top honor at the national 2015 Math Skills Competition for Jobs for American Graduates, which was held in Washington, D.C. Nunez, who placed first in a field of 27 competitors, currently serves as JAG president. He has a 3.5 GPA and is employed at Chick-fil-A. Nunez plans to attend Clemson University.

■ Lillian DeBruhl, who works in the front office of the St. Matthews K-8 School, was recognized as the 2015-16 Calhoun County Classified Employee of the Year. Other school employees recognized were: Brenda Arant, Sandy Run K-8 School nurse; Rosalind Jenkins, Calhoun County High



T&D CORRESPONDENT LARRY P. JORDAN

Calhoun County High School senior Luis Nunez, left, was recognized at the Calhoun County School Board’s Jan. 25 meeting for winning the top award in the national 2015 Math Skills Competition for Jobs for American Graduates in Washington, D.C. Shown with him is CCHS Principal Cynthia Johnson.

School; and Ruby Guinyard, district office housekeeper.

■ The Calhoun County School Board was recognized in honor of Board Recognition Month. All of the board members were presented with a gift bag.

■ The board went into executive session to consider an employee resignation and the superintendent’s evaluation but took no action upon returning to the public meeting.

■ *Contact the writer:*
803-874-3276.

Title: **Kasich in Greenville: I'll stay 'relentlessly positive'**
 Author: RUDOLPH BELL DBELL@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
 Size: 39.21 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



■ ■ ■ ■ ELECTION 2016

Kasich in Greenville: I'll stay 'relentlessly positive'

RUDOLPH BELL

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Republican presidential candidate John Kasich brought his message of collaborative problem-solving to a fire station in Eastside Greenville Tuesday, three days before South Carolina Republicans decide who they want in the White House.

The Ohio governor took questions on a range of issues from a modest audience in the same location where Mitt Romney campaigned for president with Gov. Nikki Haley in 2012.

Kasich shared his views on balancing the budget, transferring federal programs to the states, helping the mentally ill and the lack of customer service in the federal bureaucracy.

Noting the political "shrapnel" flying in the battle for the GOP nomination, Kasich vowed to "stay relentlessly positive about what I want to do."

He urged voters to renew "the spirit of the country" through actions that help others such as visiting lonely widows or giving employees flexible work schedules.

"The Beatles were right. Money can't buy you love. What buys you love is loving somebody," Kasich said, drawing applause.

Appearing with Kasich were two state representatives who support him: Phyllis Henderson of Greenville and Gary Clary of Pickens County.

Kasich decried the "suffocating effect" of federal regulations on small businesses and

promised to assign his vice president to keep an eye on regulations in the same way he gave that task to Ohio's lieutenant governor.

He told those in the audience who didn't already know that he had negotiated a balanced budget with the Clinton administration when he was a congressman in the 1990s and led the House Budget Committee.

Kasich promised to get Social Security off the road to insolvency if president.

Wealthy Americans won't get as much, he said, but those who depend on the retirement program "will get what they need."

Kasich trails many of his rivals for the GOP nomination in the latest polls as South Carolina Republicans get ready to vote Saturday in the state's first-in-the-South presidential primary.

A Public Policy Polling survey out Tuesday put him in fourth place in South Carolina, behind Donald Trump, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, but ahead of Jeb Bush and Ben Carson.

Asked about his poll standing by reporters, Kasich said, "We didn't expect to win here, but we'll compete as hard as we can."

Kasich was the only Republican presidential candidate who didn't respond to a request from a coalition of social conservatives to pledge support for the proposed First Amendment De-

fense Act, according to the coalition.

The legislation is designed to protect individuals and organizations from being punished by the federal government for holding beliefs in traditional marriage, according to backers, who at the national level include the American Principles Project and the Family Research Council.

In South Carolina, supporters include the South Carolina Baptist Convention, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Charleston, the Palmetto Family Alliance, and the Christian Worldview Center at North Greenville University.

Members of the coalition raised the issue at a press conference at Bob Jones University on Friday just before a presidential candidate forum.

They said three of the remaining GOP White House hopefuls — Cruz, Rubio and Carson — had signed their pledge.

Bush expressed support for the proposal, though said he doesn't sign pledges, and Trump said he'd sign the legislation as president if Congress deems it a priority.

Asked about the issue Tuesday, Kasich said, "I don't know what that means. I'd have to see what the pledge is. ..."

"Nobody should infringe on the rights of religious institutions to practice their faith inside of their operations."



Title: **Haley endorsement would not be Trump**
 Author: TIM SMITH TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
 Size: 52.7 square inch
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Haley endorsement would not be Trump

TIM SMITH

TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM

COLUMBIA - Gov. Nikki Haley hasn't made up her mind yet on which GOP candidate she will support in Saturday's presidential preference primary but she knows it will not be Donald Trump.

The governor said she has talked with all of the candidates and expects to decide "soon" if she will make an endorsement.

"I'm doing what a lot of people in South Carolina are doing," she said. "I'm looking at all the candidates that are there and trying to figure out who that person would be."

What Haley said she is looking for is someone "who is going to keep our country safe," someone who understands the problems the states face and a "fighter."

"I want someone who is going to hold

Republicans accountable, and I want someone who is going to make a difference, not just for our party but for every person they represent in the country," she said.

But that person will not be Donald Trump, she said.

Trump said at a Lowcountry appearance this week that Haley had been weak in her responses to the issues of the possibly transferring prisoners from the federal detention facility at Guantanamo Bay to South Carolina and in opposing the acceptance of Syrian refugees.

Haley has fought consideration of the Naval Brig in Charleston as a site for prisoners if Guantanamo closes and has also opposed bringing Syrian refugees

into South Carolina, saying she does not have enough confidence in the vetting of Syrians.

"When you have a candidate that comes in and goes against a governor, it's everything a governor doesn't want in a president," she said. "Because we don't want a president that's just going to bash and sit there and tell us what we're not doing right. We want a president that is going to help us fight, help us win and help explain why we don't want Syrian refugees and why prisoners at Guantanamo Bay don't need to come to South Carolina."

Haley also said she took her daughter to the GOP debate in Greenville Saturday and was "embarrassed" at the criti-

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Haley

Continued from Page 1A

cism of former President George Bush by Trump over Iraq and 9/11.

Trump said during the debate that Bush made a "big fat mistake" on Iraq and accused the Bush administration of lying about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Trump also said that Bush did not keep the country safe during 9/11 because the World Trade Centers were attacked on his watch.

"I was embarrassed to see a candidate criticize the president on one of the worst days that we've had in American history," she said, "and criticize the way this president handled it. That was a sad day for America and a tough day for the president and to sit there and put him down in front of my daughter, I didn't know what to say to that. There were no words."

Haley in 2012 endorsed the GOP's eventual nominee, Mitt Romney. But

GOP voters in South Carolina instead picked Newt Gingrich.

Haley said it is possible she will not endorse any candidate. She said this election's dynamics are different, with the nation facing massive debt, the threat of terrorism and the loss of a Supreme Court justice.

Danielle Vinson, a Furman University political science professor, said one of the considerations Haley has to face is if she endorses a candidate who does not win.

Trump enjoys a comfortable margin in the polls over the rest of the field.

Vinson said a Haley endorsement might "move some people at the margins who are looking at Kasich and Bush."

"If she were to endorse Bush, it might suggest he has some momentum," she said.

If Haley declines to endorse anyone,

"it keeps her from burning any bridges" among candidates, Vinson said. "And so it leaves her open for vice president or a cabinet position at some point regardless of who wins that nomination," she said.

Of course, if someone wins who doesn't receive her endorsement, "they are certainly free when looking at VP candidates to look for others who have been more helpful and who are from states who don't automatically vote Republican. Whoever picks her doesn't need her to get them votes in South Carolina in the general election. But some of them might need help in the primary."

Haley said she is not sure of the value of endorsements.

"I don't know how much endorsements mean," she said. "I've never put a lot of weight on endorsements. Trying to figure out whether that matters or not is what I'm trying to weigh out right now."

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LAUREN PETRACCA/STAFF

Gov. Nikki Haley says she is certain only about which candidate she will not endorse.

Title: **BMW reigns as nation's largest vehicle exporter**
 Author: MICHAEL BURNS MDBURNS@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
 Size: 66.49 square inch
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BMW reigns as nation's largest vehicle exporter

Greer facility nation's largest vehicle exporter

MICHAEL BURNS

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BMW Manufacturing Co. has announced that the export value of its passenger vehicles through the Port of Charleston in 2015 totaled \$9.8 billion, confirming the company's Greer facility as the leading U.S. automotive exporter by value, a position it's enjoyed since 2014.

According to data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, this accomplishment represents a 7.8 percent increase since then.

More than 280,000 vehicles were exported from BMW's South Carolina plant in 2015, more than 70 percent of the plant's total volume.

"Once again BMW is proud to claim the top vehicle-exporter spot," said Manfred Erlacher, president and CEO of BMW Manufacturing. "We had a record production year and a record sales year. In addition to being the largest U.S. automotive exporter, our South Carolina plant has also become the largest facility in BMW's global production network. These achievements are significant and clearly reinforce BMW's ongoing commitment to the U.S."

BMW Manufacturing currently produces more than 1,400 vehicles each day and is the exclusive exporter of X-model vehicles (X3, X4, X5 and X6) to more than 140 global markets. In 2015, the Greer plant produced a record 400,904 vehicles, and a \$1 billion expansion investment announced in 2014 continues.

The BMW brand finished 2015 with rec-

ord sales of 346,023 vehicles in the U.S. Nearly 30 percent of that represents a Greer-made X-Model.

"BMW has been a treasured part of the South Carolina family since the first cars rolled out of its Spartanburg County facility," said South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley. "Today's announcement is another re-

minder that there's no limit to what we can achieve when Team South Carolina, and our world class workforce, work together with a great corporate citizen like BMW."

"We congratulate BMW on being the largest automotive exporter to the world as its value reaches nearly \$10 billion," said S.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Bobby Hitt. "This announcement reinforces the success a company can have when choosing to locate or expand here in South Carolina. We look forward to their continuing to grow and thrive for many years to come."

Greer's Inland Port enables BMW to ship vehicles overnight 212 miles to the Port of Charleston.

"SC Ports Authority has a strong partnership with BMW, and their operations are a tremendous asset to our port," said Jim Newsome, SCPA president and CEO. "We are proud to serve the nation's leading automotive exporter through both our Charleston and Greer facilities and look forward to supporting their future growth."

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Author: MICHAEL BURNS MDBURNS@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
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FILE/STAFF

**Workers at BMW
Manufacturing in Greer
put the final touches on
vehicles as they roll off
the assembly line.**