

Title: **Gov. Haley to headline fundraiser for GOP women**
 Author:
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Gov. Haley to headline fundraiser for GOP women

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley is headlining an Atlanta fundraiser next month for Republican women

When? The invitation to the Sept. 16 event was sent out by Eric Tanenblatt, one of the largest GOP bundlers in the South and a principal with Dentons, a law firm headquartered in Atlanta, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

How much? The \$2,500-a-ticket event will raise money for the "Women Winning Victory Committee 2016."

For who? The committee's Republican beneficiaries, who also will attend, are U.S. Sen. Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire; Wyoming congressional candidate Liz Cheney, daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney; and U.S. Reps. Barbara Comstock of Virginia, Martha McSally of Arizona and Elise Stefanik of New York, according to a note accompanying the invitation.

Title: **Farmers who want part of \$40M in state aid face deadline**
Author:
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Farmers who want part of \$40M in state aid face deadline

COLUMBIA

South Carolina farmers in 42 counties who want some of the \$40 million in aid legislators approved over Gov. Nikki Haley's veto have hours to turn in their paperwork.

Applications must be postmarked or delivered Monday to the state Department of Agriculture.

Legislators approved the aid in May to help farmers stay afloat after last October's torrential rains.

The aid can cover up to 20 percent of losses, but no farmer can get more than \$100,000.

Farmers in Cherokee, Pickens and Oconee counties have three more weeks to apply. Those counties weren't added to the eligibility list until July 20.

— ASSOCIATED PRESS

Title: **We need to change roads funding**
 Author: GUEST COLUMN
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We need to change roads funding

NEAL COLLINS

GUEST COLUMN

Would it surprise you to hear that the South Carolina Department of Transportation is the most financially efficient transportation agency in the United States? Or, to hear there is near unanimity among state officials that SCDOT is woefully underfunded? It shouldn't.

Unfortunately, despite modern technology, communication is the toughest thing in politics. Instead of effectively relaying this information, we elected officials' have been unable to break through the noise of social media, blogs, conservative talk, advocacy groups, and an understaffed press corps.

First, we're in Upstate SC so allow me to check some conservative boxes. I'm an elected official from Pickens County — that, in itself, should prove my conservative credentials. My record will show that I'm one of the most fiscally conservative House members. It's also the reason I'm writing this op-ed. The path we have taken over my first two years and, what I fear for the future, is not one of true fiscal conservatism. We state officials have been able to campaign on "no new gas taxes," yet we have started a dangerous trend of spending state funds on roads. Using state funds is neither a conservative nor responsible approach. There are 170,000 vehicles that cross the South Carolina-Georgia line on Interstates 85, 95 and 20. South Carolina taxpayers are shouldering the burden of their use when we use state funds.

As to efficiency — South Carolina ranks most financially efficient in per-mile spending in recurring state-source

spending at \$19 per mile. By comparison, New Jersey spends \$1,415 per mile. Yes, you read that correctly, South Carolina is 75 times more efficient with state money than New Jersey. In real

numbers, New Jersey raises \$3.3 billion for 2,300 miles while South Carolina raises \$784,000 for 41,400 miles. In other words, NJ raises over four times as much as South Carolina with just 6 percent of the roads. For a micro example, Pickens County received a paltry \$1.1 million this year for roads. Conservatively speaking, it takes \$100,000 to resurface one two-lane mile and \$400,000 to reconstruct. Thus, Pickens County will be able to reconstruct two miles or resurface 11 miles this year. Pickens County has 1,526 lane miles, of which 1,000 lane miles need reconstruction and 300 miles need resurfacing. Combining the funding of DOT, GPATS, ACOG and CTC, we will reconstruct/resurface approximately 30 of the 1,300 miles (2 percent) in need this year.

As to underfunding — state officials recognize state funding to roads is woefully inadequate. That is why Gov. Nikki Haley proposed a 10-cent gas tax increase with a massive income tax cut in 2014. The House passed a separate bill in 2014 that would have capped an increase at 10 cents. House and Senate passed budgets the past two years that

have included substantial one-time monies to roads. All \$216 million of last year's surplus went to counties for roads. \$159 million of this year's surplus went to roads. Thus, we have used \$375 million of state funds on roads in

the past two years. In addition, we re-directed \$215 million in fees, fines and vehicle sales tax to bond for road projects.

It has been estimated that one-third of the gas tax user fee is paid by non-residents. Thus, when we have used \$375 million in state funds, we have effectively ghost-taxed our citizens \$125 million over the past two years. We are not being conservative stewards when one adds this ghost-tax, the hidden cost of higher reconstruction costs, and the direct cost of wear and tear on vehicles.

So, let's get to solutions. I will be advocating for a singular focus on roads this year and proposing a number of bills: (a) further reform of SCDOT to make it an executive agency; (b) development of statewide criteria based on traffic count to close or transfer between 1 percent to 10 percent of roads by end of 2018; (c) make the SCDOT policy into law that state money must be spent on state roads only, (d) pass a gas tax increase of 10 cents per gallon with an income tax cut for all and a rebate to each licensed senior citizen; (e) increase the sales cap on hybrid and electric vehicles; (f) require signage at each project using state money indicating it is state-funded project; (g) create a pilot, volunteer mileage-based user fee program.

My fear is we will begin another gubernatorial race without a conservative, long-term funding solution. It is too easy to politicize SCDOT. With Senate seats safe and a brief window before gubernatorial campaigns begin, 2017 is the year.



Rep. Neal Collins represents District 5 in the South Carolina House.
 County: Greenville

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