

Title: **Senate Report**  
 Author: By Senator Kent Williams. District 28  
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# Senate Report

## Work Ready Communities

By  
**Senator  
 Kent  
 Williams.**

### District 28

Across South Carolina, community leaders are getting the job done in getting our workers ready for work.

They have earned the designation as being a "work ready" community.

In fact, South Carolina was the first state to become fully certified as a work ready, according to a July press release from the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce, or DEW. The work ready certification is part of a national, voluntary initiative by ACT, a leader educational assessment and workforce development that is known for its college admis-

sion testing. "We couldn't be more excited to announce that South Carolina is the first state in the nation to have every county become certified work ready," Gov. Nikki Haley said the DEW press release.

"Team South Carolina's is paying off – we have seen our state become one of the most competitive environments for business development in the world, and we're just getting started."

ACT, which has been around more than 50 years, says its Certified Work Ready Communities program is "improving the skills and work readiness of the workforce while giving area businesses an efficient, reliable way to identify skilled job candidates," the organization states.

"With our commitment to

the Work Ready initiative and the continued development of a skilled workforce, it is not surprising that employment numbers have been at historic highs over the last year, and compa-

nies continue to expand and choose South Carolina as the place to do business," stated Cheryl M. Stanton, DEW's executive director.

South Carolina's work ready initiative "provides a framework to strengthen economic development using a community-based approach, grounded in certifying counties as work ready," states the DEW press release.

DEW states the effort will help existing businesses thrive while creating a climate for new investment by:

- Improving high school graduation rates
- Helping existing companies grow and add new jobs
- Attracting new business and investment
- Providing a competitive advantage over other areas
- Improving the focus on local business climate
- Strengthening regional and cross-sector ties

The work ready initiative "empowers counties and states with actionable data and specific workforce goals that drive economic growth," DEW states.

Traditionally, when companies advertised for new

employees, they may have used "help wanted" or "now hiring" signs. Now, communities are seeking to lure companies by signaling they have the skilled workers to meet business needs.

Getting our folk ready for and employed in good jobs should be our Job No. 1.

\*

*As with all matters concerning state government, I want to hear your opinions and suggestions concerning these issues. Please contact me in my Columbia office located at 608 Gressette Office Building. You can reach me, or a member of my staff in Columbia at (803) 212-6000 or by fax at (803) 212-6011.*

*My district office is located at 2523 East Highway 76, Marion, SC 29571, the phone number is (843) 423-8237 and the fax number is (843) 431-6049.*

*You may also email me at kentwilliams@scsenate.gov.*

*My business phone is (843) 423-3904. Please use this information to write, call or email me with your suggestions and concerns regarding issues before the Senate and in our community.*



Title: **September Is Recovery Month**

Author:

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## **September Is Recovery Month**

Governor Nikki Haley has proclaimed September as Recovery Month in South Carolina. During the month of September, communities statewide are encouraged to recognize the achievement of those who seek to overcome the stigma of addiction and secure the benefits of substance abuse treatment and recovery.

The theme of this year's Recovery Month in South Carolina is "Our Families, Our Stories, Our Recovery!"

"Educating our communities about how substance use disorders affect all people is essential to combating stigma and resolving misconceptions associated with addiction," Gov. Haley stated in her proclamation. "The mission of Recovery Month is to celebrate individuals who have achieved long-term recovery; to acknowledge those who work in the prevention, treatment and recovery services; and to encourage individuals and families in need to seek help."

Title: **New challenge for women: Getting elected**  
 Author: BY JASON LESLEY COASTAL OBSERVER  
 Size: 55.18 column inches  
 Pawleys Island, SC Circulation: 5136



# New challenge for women: Getting elected

BY JASON LESLEY  
 COASTAL OBSERVER

Beth Stedman, president and CEO of the Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce, said her 6-year-old daughter asked her why all the pictures of U.S. presidents in her first-grade classroom were of men.

"That was a tough question to answer," Stedman told a group gathered last week at Pawleys Prime to celebrate the 96th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. Dr. Holley Tankersley, associate dean of Coastal Carolina University's college of humanities and fine arts, told members of the "Women's Equality Day" group they should celebrate Hillary Clinton's nomination for president, even if they don't vote for her.

"This is a historic moment in American politics," Tankersley said.

"Let's appreciate that there's a woman nominee in one of our major parties. That is astounding. Will it change anything? Absolutely. It changes everything. We know the chief reason women are under-represented in office is not because women can't win elections. Women are as likely to win as men. The problem is that women don't run for office. The No. 1 reason is they say they

feel under-qualified even when an objective review shows they are qualified or even over-qualified. Now when is the last time you

heard a man say he's not qualified? Probably never."

Tankersley said Clinton being the nominee of the Democratic Party will pay dividends for women seeking office in the future. There will be more donor networks and political action committees aimed at women's issues.

"If Clinton wins, there will likely be some backlash," Tankersley said. "After this year, someone in this country is going to re-invent government and politics, and I want it to be us."

Tankersley said women had to fight to gain the vote in 1920. Southern states opposed ratification of the amendment with the exception of Tennessee, the last state needed for a two-thirds majority and approval. "To add to the drama," Tankersley said, "the

Tennessee state legislature was split, 48 votes for ratification, 48 votes against."

The deciding vote came down to Harry Burn, a 24-year-old representative from eastern Tennessee who two years earlier had become the youngest member of the state legislature. Though he wore a red rose signifying opposition to women's suffrage, Burn carried a note in his jacket pocket from his mother imploring him to vote aye. He did so, and hid in the capitol building's attic until the angry mob subsided.

"Even though there were no women in the Tennessee legislature," Tank-

ersley said, "a woman influenced the vote."

Women have made progress toward equality but still are paid 79 percent of what a man is paid for the same work, the professor said. Women comprise 19.4 percent of the U.S. Congress, she said, but the U.S. lags far behind other

western industrialized nations.

"I'm sorry to say that progress in South Carolina has been slower: 14 percent in the legislature with two senators and 22 members of the House. Nikki Haley is the first woman elected governor, but the state has never sent a woman to the U.S. Senate. Six have been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. All won their seats in special elections to fill vacancies caused by the deaths of their husbands and served less than two years. I think we can do better," Tankersley said.

While it's easy to count women in leadership positions, inclusion is much harder to find and measure. "Are the women at the table actively included in decision-making?" she asked. "Are they accepted and not just tolerated? Women are more likely to be interrupted at meetings. It's more likely that a man will repeat what a woman has just said and claim it as his own idea. That's true in corporate and public institutions."

She said women in Congress are more likely to get time to speak on the

floor. They are no more effective than men in passing legislation except in one case: when they are in the minority party. Women are better at building coalitions. However, the U.S. House has had just one female speaker, and the U.S. Senate has never had a woman majority leader. Only 17 women have chaired a congressional committee, even though the average seniority of women in Congress is 14 years. Twenty-four of 50 state supreme court justices are women. "That's far closer to parity than any position," Tankersley said. "Why? The same logic in the legislature applies to women in court. State's divided politically are more likely to select a woman chief because they know they need a consensus builder to bridge that divide."

She challenged the people attending the luncheon to commit to electing a South Carolina woman to the U.S. House of Representatives by 2020 and the U.S. Senate by 2022.

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**Dr. Holley Tankersley**

Title: **ILHS county's only ACT over-performer**  
 Author: HANNAH L. STRONG hstrong@thelancasternews.com  
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# ILHS county's only ACT over-performer

*County below state average  
on college-readiness test*

HANNAH L. STRONG  
 hstrong@thelancasternews.com

South Carolina released ACT scores for all 2016 graduating classes last week, and while scores slipped across the county, Indian

average composite ACT score was 19.4.

Indian Land High had the county's highest average composite score at 19.4.

ILHS students averaged 18.5 in English, 19.2 in math, 20 in reading and 19.4 in science.

In 2015, ILHS' average composite ACT score was 21.2.

ILHS Principal David

areas of strength and areas of need within its curriculum.

"We are satisfied with our 19.4 composite average and other benchmark scores, as they are all close to a full point higher than the state average," Shamble said.

"We also realize there is still plenty of room for

Aug. 23 that last year's ACT reports show much room for improvement.

The ACT, a career and college readiness test, scores high school students on

**See ACT Page 2**

Land High School still had the county's highest score.

Lancaster County students received a 17.2 average composite score, a notch below the statewide average of 18.5.

In 2015, the county's

Shamble said his school will use the data to determine

improvement."

**All students now taking test**

The S.C. Department of Education said in a release

## ACT...

**From Page 1**

English, math, science and reading. The test is scored on a 1 to 36 point scale.

This year's scores are significantly lower than last year's. But the comparison isn't really meaningful, because for the first time, all of this year's graduating seniors were required to take the ACT as juniors. Previously, students only took the test if they needed it for college applications. With that larger pool of students, scores were

expected to drop.

Gov. Nikki Haley signed new requirement into law in May 2014. All juniors in the state now must take the ACT and WorkKeys, a skills-assessment test.

The number of 2015 graduating seniors in Lancaster County taking the ACT was 280, compared to 795 in this year's graduating class. Ten years ago, 220 students in the district took the ACT, averaging 18.3 points.

**Other county school scores**

Andrew Jackson High School's average was 18.3. Students' average scores were 16.8 in English, 19 in math, 18.7 in reading and 18.1 in science.

The average at Buford High School was 16.9. BHS students averaged 15.1 in English, 17.5 in math, 17.3 in reading and 17.2 in science.

Lancaster High School had the lowest average in the district at 15.4. LHS scores aver-

aged 13.6 in English, 16.3 in math, 15.8 in reading and 15.5 in science.

Across the region, Fort Mill school district had the highest scores, with an average composite score of 21.7, followed by Kershaw County at 18.1, Chesterfield County at 17.1 and Chester County at 16.6. ♦ ♦

Title: **Governor Hnloy visits D-0 Middle School**  
 Author: Jerry E. Halmon Staff Reporter  
 Size: 51.46 column inches  
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# Governor Haley visits D-0 Middle School

*Jerry E. Halmon  
Staff Reporter*

The atmosphere inside the Denmark-Olar Middle School Gymnasium was electric last Friday morning. The reason for all the excitement? Bamberg native and South Carolina Governor Nikki R. Haley fulfilled a promise she made earlier to return to the district and bring the students some badly needed school supplies and cool new sneakers. The school supplies and back packs were a part of the Governor's non-profit organization "The Original Six Foundation" and the shoes were courtesy of INNERSOLE a program involving University of South Carolina head women's basketball coach Dawn Staley.

"We came and spoke with Bamberg School District Two Superintendent Dr. Thelma Sojourner and asked what do

you need?" "She (Dr. Sojourner) said school supplies, back packs and add in the shoes and then the kids feel like they are worthy and the confidence it gives the kids when they know that they've earned it and we turn around and challenge them to make it a great year."

After the program Governor Haley said The Original Six Foundation was an outgrowth of her experience growing up in the small town of Bamberg: "So what I can tell you growing up in Bamberg we didn't know what we didn't have. But we had each other. It was all about families and relationships. So to have us come in here and say we believe in you. We know that you're up to great things and we want you to have a great school year and forget anything that has happened in the past."

Governor Haley said "that's what these foundations

are for to lift up children. These are our next doctors, lawyers and teachers. Whether its working in a restaurant or being a physician. We want them to be the very best they can be. We believe in them." Governor commented that Friday's event has been the goal of The Original Six Foundation from the start.

"This has been a mission of The Original Six Foundation for the last six years. I know a lot of the rural areas are forgotten. And, for me, so what we try to do is connect with the communities and find out what they need." The Governor said the message she wanted to leave with the students at DOMS was: "I know they are meant for great things and I want them to prove it."

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Photo - J. Halmon

**S.C. Governor Nikki R. Haley made a return visit to BSD#2 last week as part of her 'The Original Six Foundation' bringing school supplies and sneakers to the students at DOMS.**

Title: **Spending too little costs hundreds of lives**  
 Author: BY CASSIE COPE ccope@thcstate.com  
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## S.C. ROADS

# Spending too little costs hundreds of lives

■ More than 4,500 people have been killed on the state's roads since 2011. State officials say they know how to make roads safer. But, they add, they don't have the money.

BY CASSIE COPE  
 ccope@thcstate.com

### CHARLESTON

Grayson Lee, 19, was driving to Columbia from Charleston when her car ran off Interstate 26, slamming into a tree.

Lee was thrown from her Ford Mustang, dying nearly two years ago on Sept. 2,

FROM PAGE 1C

## ROADS

The Palmetto State had the nation's deadliest roads in 2014, based on miles traveled. In part, that was attributable to years of spending little to maintain S.C. roads and bridges - clearing ditches, patching potholes and replacing damaged signs.

The Transportation Department estimates it needs an extra \$943 million a year to make the state's deteriorating roads safer.

The sticking point is where that money would come from.

A key part of the solution, advocates say, is raising the state's gas tax - the third lowest in the nation - to provide more money for

2014, her mother, Amy Lee recalled.

"It was instant," Lee said of her daughter's death.

Grayson Lee is one of 4,534 people who died on S.C. roads since 2011.

Hundreds of those deaths could have been prevented

if the state spent more to make its roads safer. But the S.C. Department of Transportation says it doesn't have the money it would need to save those lives.

SEE ROADS, 2C

roads. That tax has not been raised in 30 years.

However, for two years, South Carolina's GOP-controlled Legislature and Republican Gov. Nikki Haley have turned efforts to get the roads agency more money for repairs into a political football.

But, when S.C. lawmakers return to Columbia in January, they yet again promise to look at a long-term funding solution to fixing the Palmetto State's crumbling roads.

### DEATH BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

Now, when a S.C. driver runs off the road, there too

often is little space to slow down or stop.

The driver slams into a tree.

Or plows into an embankment.

Or flips into a ditch.

Of the 4,534 fatalities on S.C. highways since Jan. 1, 2011, at least 2,133 occurred when a vehicle ran off the road, according to preliminary information from the Department of Public Safety. One in every five of those fatalities - at least 981 - involved a driver running off the road and hitting a tree.

S.C. officials say they know how to cut down on those deaths: clear areas alongside highways. So-call

"clear zones" would give drivers room to recover if they ran off the road, a key to preventing deaths, roads officials say. That solution is identified in the state's 2015 Strategic Highway Safety Plan, which aims to eliminate highway fatalities.

"There's little margin for error for a driver who gets distracted or drifts off the side of the road because of obstacles being in the clear zone," said state Transportation Department chief Christy Hall.

Instead, if a motorist runs out of their lane or off the road, the car "will skid out of control and roll or hit something else," said state

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Sen. Larry Grooms, R-Berkeley, who chairs the Senate Transportation Committee. "The something else, too many times, is a tree."

In Grayson Lee's case, it was a tree.

Lee was not speeding, according to a post-crash

incident report. But she was not wearing her seat belt, which was unusual, her mother said.

"We don't 100 percent know what happened," Amy Jackson Lee said.

### **\$1 BILLION TO MAKE SC ROADS SAFER**

The state Transportation Department says it needs almost \$1 billion a year more for routine maintenance, resurfacing and other safety improvements, including money for guard rails and cable barriers.

But Hall knows her agency won't get nearly that amount in added money from legislators.

So, the road-repair agency plans to break down the state's highway safety needs, saying exactly what it will do if it gets any new dollars.

"I don't think anybody disagrees that there's a lot of deferred maintenance on our roads and bridges in this state, but that problem wasn't created overnight nor is it going to be solved overnight," Hall said.

Transportation Department safety programs now include adding rumble strips to warn drivers they are at a road's edge and 2-foot-wide paved shoulders to give errant drivers a chance to recover. But those features are added only if the state has the right-of-way on a paving project or if the area is targeted specifically for safety improvements.

The Transportation De-

partment would like to add more rumble strips on shoulders, guard rails and cable barriers along more S.C. highways.

In part, it wants to do so to address the state's unsafe rural roads. South Carolina ranked second in the nation in highway fatalities on rural roads in 2015, according to a report by The Road Information Program.

Making S.C. roads safer will require more money, says Senate leader Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, adding, "One death is too many."

In January, Leatherman says, he will push for the Legislature to approve an increase in recurring money to the Department of Transportation. The road-repair agency cannot approve contracts for road and bridge projects unless it knows it will have money every year to pay for those projects, he added.

The quest for more recurring money for roads generally translates into increasing the state's 16.75 cent-a-gallon gas tax. But, last spring, legislators refused to increase that tax, as they have for the past 29 years.

Instead, they approved spending \$4 billion over 10 years to pay for some road improvements. That's roughly 10 percent of what the

Transportation Department has said it needs over the next two decades to ensure South Carolina has excellent roads and bridges, and an expanded road network.

Most lawmakers agree \$4 billion isn't nearly enough.

"We kid ourselves if we think it's 'mission accomplished' when we are using general fund revenue and or bonding as our solution to roads," said state Rep. Gary Simrill, R-York.

Simrill, assistant majority leader of House Republicans, sponsored a proposal to increase the gas tax in 2014 that passed the House. "It (a higher gas tax) is a user fee-based system."

While that gas-tax hike died in the Senate, Simrill says the subject will come up again. House Republicans have contacted him, saying they want to discuss increasing the gas-tax at a House GOP Caucus retreat in October, he added.

House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, is open to the idea of a gas-tax hike as well.

"Next session, all options will be on the table and every concept will be explored to find the best possible solution to adequately fix our roads," Lucas said, adding the state's "crumbling infrastructure ... endangers millions of motorists."

Even Gov. Nikki Haley, who many Republican and Democratic legislators blame for blocking road-repair bills, says the \$4 billion approved last spring

isn't enough.

The borrowing proposal is "not of the magnitude or sustainability" to address the long-term needs of the state's highway system, Haley noted, signing the borrowing proposal.

### **HALEY: GIVE ME CONTROL OF AGENCY BEFORE ANY ADDED MONEY**

Many legislators point to Haley as the reason a roads fix has not been passed.

Haley vowed to oppose a gas-tax hike when she was running for re-election in 2014. In 2015, however, she changed her mind, unveiling a plan to increase the gas tax in exchange for a far larger income tax cut, which

critics said would de-fund other parts of state government to the tune of \$2 billion when fully phased-in.

State Sen. Joel Lourie, the Richland Democrat who is retiring at the end of this year, says Haley needs to help find a roads solution.

"It's very hard for my Republican colleagues to vote for a tax increase when she has the benefit of the bully podium and is using that against them."

However, Haley says she will continue to push for changes to the structure of the Transportation Department before giving the agency any new money.

Haley wants the agency to report directly to her. Now, legislators can reject her nominees to the commission

that oversees the agency.

Changing the agency's structure is necessary to ensure road projects are not driven by politics, she said. As an example, she cited the Transportation Department Commission recently approving a \$21 million list of road "beautification" projects proposed by U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-Columbia.

"Here you have money, and instead of putting it to saving lives, you did it to plant flowers," Haley said. "It is unacceptable."

Haley said if lawmakers will give her control of the agency, she will be happy to discuss more money for road repairs.

Some doubt that lawmakers - with less new money to spend next year and pressing needs in rural schools and, now, state pensions - will get anything done on roads in 2017.

"As a retiring legislator, and soon-to-be private citizen, I still have grave concerns about the state's willingness to invest in its in-

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frastructure," said Sen. Lou-  
 rie, who worked with  
 Republicans and Democrats  
 in a failed effort to pass a  
 gas-tax increase earlier this  
 year. "We don't need to wait  
 for more tragedies."

### TREES VS. HUMANS

Almost two years have  
 passed since Grayson Lee  
 died alongside Interstate 26.

The stretch of interstate  
 where she died was known to  
 be dangerous. Trees line the  
 road and are in its median in  
 the heavily forested area.

From 2007 to 2011, In-  
 terstate 26 - between In-  
 terstate 95 and Summerville  
 - had more serious wrecks  
 involving trees than any  
 other S.C. interstate. Twen-  
 ty-four percent of interstate  
 crashes involving fatalities  
 or serious injuries occurred  
 on that stretch of I-26, ac-  
 cording to the Transporta-  
 tion Department.

In part, that is because the  
 average distance from I-26's  
 roadway to the tree line in  
 the median was 25 feet, 21

feet closer than the recom-  
 mended 46 feet.

Legislators had a chance to  
 address that issue in 2013.

Instead, the GOP-con-  
 trolled Legislature made it  
 more difficult for the Trans-  
 portation Department to  
 make the road safer, requir-  
 ing it to get the approval of  
 local governments before  
 removing trees on that  
 stretch in I-26.

"I was opposed to clear-  
 cutting all of the trees" said  
 Grooms, who pushed for  
 local approval, adding, "The  
 trees add a lot of beauty to  
 our roadways."

Grooms advocated for  
 putting up cable barriers and  
 keeping the trees.

After studying the issue,  
 the Transportation Depart-  
 ment said more expensive

guard rails would be needed  
 to keep motorists out of the  
 nearby trees. However, the  
 agency said guard rails were  
 too expensive.

As the trees vs. safety  
 debate heated up, 19-year-  
 old Grayson Lee was killed.

Grayson's death was her  
 fault, not the fault of the  
 trees, according to some who  
 commented on news articles  
 about her crash. Others said  
 the teen's death was not a  
 reason to cut down trees, her  
 mother recalled.

"It's a tree versus a hu-  
 man life," she said. "It's  
 somebody's daughter, some-  
 body's brother, somebody's  
 sister, somebody's mom,  
 somebody's dad."

Ultimately, trees were  
 removed on only about half  
 of the 23-mile stretch pro-  
 posed. About 12 miles also  
 now have cable barriers in  
 the median.

Since their installation  
 was completed in September  
 2015, 26 cars have crashed  
 into the cable barriers in  
 that section of I-26, accord-  
 ing to the Transportation  
 Department. Only one crash  
 resulted in a fatality.

The tree that Grayson hit  
 is still standing, her mother  
 said.

Cassie Cope: 803-771-8657,  
 @cassielcope

“

WE KID OURSELVES IF WE THINK ITS MISSION ACCOMPLISHED  
 WHEN WE ARE USING GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND/OR  
 BONDING AS OUR SOLUTION TO ROADS.

S.C. Rep. Gary Simrill, R-York

**4,534 DEATHS**

Number of S.C. highway fatalities since 2011

**969 DEATHS**

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*The number of those fatalities that involved a car crashing into a tree*

## \$943 MILLION

*The dollars the Transportation Department estimates it needs to improve the state's deteriorating roads and make them safer*

## 16.75 CENT-A-GALLON

*South Carolina's gas tax, among the lowest in the nation, has not been increased for 30 years*

### S.C. roads and safety

#### SPENDING TOO LITTLE ON ROADS ...

**S.C. barely spent more for roads last fiscal year than it did in 2005.**

<b>2005-06:</b> \$1.5 billion	<b>2011-12:</b> \$1.5 billion
<b>2006-07:</b> \$1.4 billion	<b>2012-13:</b> \$1.4 billion
<b>2007-08:</b> \$1 billion	<b>2013-14:</b> \$1.6 billion
<b>2008-09:</b> \$1.1 billion	<b>2014-15:</b> \$1.7 billion
<b>2009-10:</b> \$1.3 billion	<b>2015-16:</b> \$1.6 billion
<b>2010-1:</b> \$1.3 billion	

#### HAS LED TO TOO LITTLE MONEY FOR REPAIRS, SAFETY ...

**State money paid for routine maintenance, repaving roads and traffic signals and operations over the past decade (in unadjusted dollars):**

<b>2007-08:</b> \$332.5 million	<b>2012-13:</b> \$269.9 million
<b>2008-09:</b> \$366.1 million	<b>2013-14:</b> \$281 million
<b>2009-10:</b> \$392.7 million	<b>2014-15:</b> \$294.1 million

**2010-11:** \$333.4 million

**2015-16:** \$344.8 million

**2011-12:** \$330 million

**2016-17:** \$354.8 million

#### LEAVING AN ALMOST \$1 BILLION A YEAR NEED ...

**The Transportation Department estimates it needs an extra \$943 million a year to improve the state's crumbling roads, including making them safer. Where the money would go:**

**Re-paving:** \$500 million

**Guard rail and cable**

**Routine maintenance:** \$233 million

**barriers:** \$48 million

**Bridges:** \$46 million

**Signs and road markings:** \$100.3 million

**Traffic signals:** \$15.8 million

#### MEANWHILE, CRUMBLING ROADS COST S.C. RESIDENTS BILLIONS ...

**The added annual cost per motorist of driving on S.C. roads because of lost time and wasted fuel due to traffic congestion and crashes in the state's three largest urban areas is:**

**Columbia:** \$1,250

**Greenville:** \$1,248

**Charleston:** \$1,168

#### OR THEIR LIVES

### S.C.'s deadly roads: The toll

**4,534:** Deaths on S.C. roads since 2011

**2,133:** Fatalities involving a car running off the road

**981:** Fatalities involving a car hitting a tree

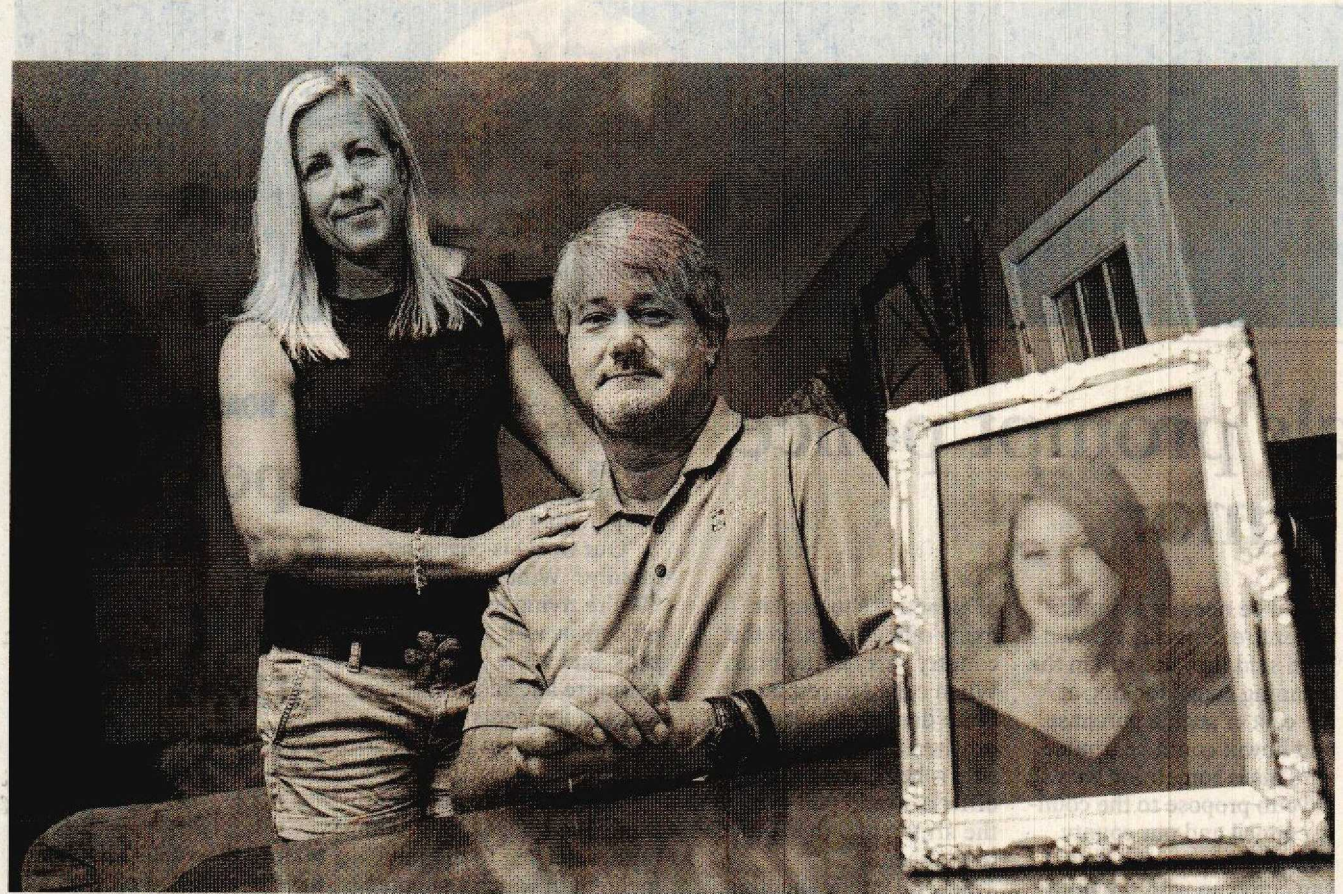
SOURCES: S.C. Department of Transportation, S.C. Department of Public Safety, The Road Information Program

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GERRY MELENDEZ gmelendez@thcstate.com

Amy and David Lee lost their 19-year-old daughter, Grayson Ann Lee, when she ran off the road and hit a tree in the median near mile marker 183 on I-26 in 2014. The Lees say the area should have been lined with cable barriers.



Courtesy of the Lee family

Grayson Ann Lee's car after she ran off the road and hit a tree in the median near mile marker 183 on I-26 in 2014.

Title: **Lawmakers want Self-Purge of Recreation Commission Board**  
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## Lawmakers Want Self-Purge of Recreation Commission Board

By Chris Trainor

A majority of the Richland County Legislative Delegation wants five members of the Richland County Recreation Commission board to resign — but so far, none have.

On Aug. 31, 10 members of the delegation sent a letter to the Recreation Commission calling for the immediate resignation of board Chairwoman J. Marie Green and members Barbara Mickens, Weston Furgess, George Martin and Joseph Weeks. Those five board members have shown continued support for commission Director James Brown III, who is currently on paid leave and is at the center of several lawsuits and a criminal investigation against the commission.

The board members can only be removed by Gov. Nikki Haley.

In their letter, the legislators complain of board members' "malfeasance," citing "disregarded hostile work environment for the employees; blatant abuses of nepotism; approval of irresponsible compensation; ignoring multiple allegations of sexual harassment and other inappropriate conduct; lack of effective oversight and incurred excessive litigation and costs."

The legislators accuse the five board members of "[putting] their interests and those of James Brown III ahead of the interests of the citizens of Richland County."

The two members of the Recreation Commission board not named in the delegation letter — Thomas Clark and Wilbert Lewis — have not expressed support for Brown.

The commission is currently the target of five lawsuits, some of which level accusations of sexual harassment against Brown. The FBI and other law enforcement agencies also have been investigating the commission.

The 10 legislators who signed the letter were state Sens. John Courson, Joel Lourie and Thomas McElveen and state Reps. Nathan Ballentine, Beth Bernstein, Mary Gail Douglas, Kirkman Finlay, Joe McEachern,

Mia McLeod and James Smith.

That leaves seven lawmakers who did not sign.

One of those is Democratic Sen. John Scott, the delegation's chairman, who in July told *The State* that he thinks the delegation should stay out of the Recreation Commission issue until law enforcement investigations are finished, adding that Brown should not be tried "in the newspaper."

Smith, a Richland Democrat, said that, as of the morning of Sept. 6, none of the Recreation Commission board members in question had resigned. *Free Times* reached out to members of the commission board through an email address provided by commission chief of staff Tara Dickerson, but did not get a response.

Bernstein seemed particularly irked by the board, especially when it came to reported sexual harassment experienced by female Recreation Commission employees.

"The commissioners have ignored multiple allegations of sexual harassment and other inappropriate conduct by Director James Brown," Bernstein said. "As a woman and a mother of two daughters, I'm appalled and outraged — outraged — at the reckless disregard of these allegations. Let me be clear: It's not one allegation of inappropriate conduct. In addition to the allegations in the pending lawsuits, we have other complaints of inappropriate behavior by Mr. Brown. That is unacceptable."

Lourie, a longtime senator who is not seeking re-election this year, says the call for board member resignations is independent of the criminal investigation into the Recreation Commission.

"Regardless of the investigation, we believe the board has committed at least six acts of malfeasance," Lourie says. "Therefore, it is time for them to resign."

Lourie says the atmosphere for employees at the commission is "hostile," which he says

the board has ignored.

"Never in my years as a legislator or as a businessman have I seen the way employees have been treated [as they have been at the commission]," Lourie said. "It's not acceptable at a business and it is certainly reprehensible at a government agency."

Richland County Councilman Seth Rose chimed in on the issue, telling *Free Times* he is troubled by the fact that the commission, a special purpose district, is not under the control of County Council, even though the county funds the commission. Commission members are recommended by the Legislature and appointed by the governor.

"Moving forward, I believe the best long-term solution is for control of the Recreation Commission to be transferred to the county government who has the ability to oversee this vast entity," Rose says. "Even if the director resigned today, the systems of accountability still need to be restored to prevent similar problems from happening again a few years down the road." ■

Let us know what you think: Email [editor@free-times.com](mailto:editor@free-times.com).

Title: **PokeStops Return to the State House**

Author:

Size: 6.66 column inches

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### **PokeStops Return to the State House**

After disappearing without explanation about a month ago, PokeStops have returned to the grounds of the State House. It remains unclear why the PokeStops vanished, or why they returned; no state officials admitted to having complained to Pokémon Go game developer Niantic about the game features, which drew hundreds of players, many at night, to the State House grounds. Developers have responded to requests to take away PokeStops for security or sensitivity reasons at various sites nationwide, including the 9/11 memorial fountain in New York City. Gov. Nikki Haley requested the return of the State House PokeStops in a tweet directed at Niantic. The stops are popular because they can be a hub to capture more of the virtual Pokémon creatures. — *Andy Shain*

Title: **Former Longtime Senator Drummond Dies**

Author:

Size: 6.04 column inches

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### Former Longtime Senator Drummond Dies

Former Democratic state Sen. John Drummond died on Sept. 3. Drummond, of Greenwood County, was 96. He served in the Senate for 42 years, from 1966 to 2008, and spent a number of years as the powerful Senate president pro tempore. Drummond also served in World War II, and his plane — the *Raid Hot Mama* — was shot down in France in 1944. Drummond was captured by German soldiers and imprisoned until 1945. “John Drummond was born to serve, and he lived an extraordinary life,” Gov. Nikki Haley said. “Michael and I lift up the Drummond family in prayer and join them in giving thanks for

Senator Drummond’s sacrifice and service.”  
— *Chris Trainor*

Title: **A Decade of City watch**

Author:

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## A Decade of City Watch

"Rude, crude and socially unacceptable – that old saying pretty much sums up my view of smoking in enclosed public spaces." — City Watch, Sept. 6, 2006

**S**o began the first edition of this column, published 10 years ago this week. As another old saying goes, "Don't hold back, tell us how you feel." I didn't, and I do.

Some 500 columns later, I can tell you this about opinion writing: People love it. And love to hate it. The result is I've been called both a genius and a moron on a weekly basis for a decade.

As long as folks are reading, both descriptions are fine with me. My intent is to promote discussion and persuade if I can. But even when I can't, I want to stir the pot of public opinion, to make people think.

I also hope to make them act in terms of bringing pressure to bear on politicians and other officials who often make decisions that have little to do with public input and even less to do with the public good.

That said, here are few bon mots and barn burners from City Watch during the early years (2006-2010). See if you recall the issues, some of which are still with us today. Let's start with that first column in support of the anti-smoking ordinance and go from there.

- "Some will fight the proposed ban and insist on their 'right' to smoke. Please. Rights are seldom absolute, and this case isn't even a close call." — Sept. 6, 2006

- "City Council abandoned its own Homeless Commission, surrendered years of work to an hour of rhetoric and punted the homeless issue on down the road." — Nov. 28, 2007

- "The City of Cayce is about to seize much of the riverfront on Columbia's side, yet no one here is lifting a finger to stop it." — Dec. 12, 2007

- "As a result of Council's lack of business acumen, we're on the way to transit funding trouble and SCANA is on the way to Cayce." —

March 5, 2008

- "The Coble-Cromartie axis of incompetence without consequence rolls on." — March 12, 2008

- "When common sense was being cast aside, Anne Sinclair often stood up alone to fight for it." — July 2, 2008

- "After three years of debate about the future of funky-chic Five Points, we're left with a Walgreens. Nothing says funky-chic like a Walgreens." — Nov. 5, 2008

- "Charles Austin should step down gracefully and be honored for his long service to the city. But if he doesn't, he should be fired." — Jan. 14, 2009

- "Lottery scholarships are a game of three-card monte, a street hustle in which the students are the marks, the universities are the dealers and the Legislature is the don." — Feb. 4, 2009

- "Council should make clear the city will fight any development plan which seeks to take down the major historic buildings on the State Hospital site." — April 1, 2009

- "What the late, great Harry Hampton and others did 35 years ago in saving the Congaree Swamp (now Congaree National Park) was a remarkable political and environmental achievement. What they did was also the Lord's work." — April 15, 2009

- "The city will either widen and deepen Rocky Branch creek or the next Five Points flood, just like the last one, is only a matter of time." — July 29, 2009

- "The original Convention Center hotel deal was, 'Damn the taxpayers and full sleaze ahead.'" — Nov. 25, 2009

- "Capt. Robert Lee of the South Carolina Highway Patrol team that reviewed the Columbia Police Department report of Benjamin's crash flatly said it was wrong. 'We felt they put undue expectations on the driver to see something illegal. They said if she saw no headlights, then she should have seen he had no headlights.' It was a Catch-22 for Deborah

Rubens. It was A Catch-22 for the ages." — June 23, 2010

- "Bob Coble is a great guy, he just wasn't a great mayor. The sad thing, for him and for us, is he could have been." — June 30, 2010


- "On June 24 at 11:18 pm as the Gamecocks faced elimination from the College World Series, Jackie Bradley, Jr. ripped a last out, last strike single to right that may have broken the Chicken Curse." — July 7, 2010

- "With opportunity knocking on, beating down and kicking in the door on merging our police forces, the new mayor and City Council showed themselves to be no different from the old mayor and city council." — Oct. 6, 2010

- "USC actually defended the outrage of paying former South Carolina First Lady Jenny Sanford \$15,000 for a speech by saying it came from student fees and not tuition, a distinction without a difference." — Nov. 3, 2010

- "In terms of his oft-repeated claim of an affair with Nikki Haley, whether political blogger Will Folks is more sword or wet noodle remains to be seen." — Nov. 10, 2010

And finally this, from the single column on which I personally received more feedback than any other during those 10 years about my 17-year-old dog passing away, and said simply: "Life will go on without Tutt. It just won't be as good." — June 2, 2010

Thanks for reading. And whether you agree or disagree with an individual column, know that it is truly my pleasure to write for the readers of *Free Times*. 

*Fisher is president of Fisher Communications, a Columbia advertising and public relations firm. He is active in local issues involving the arts, conservation, business and politics. Let us know what you think. Email editor@free-times.com.*