

Title: **Democrat calls for increased security at several South Carolina abortion clinics**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
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Democrat calls for increased security at several South Carolina abortion clinics

BY SEANNA ADCOX
 Associated Press

COLUMBIA — A Democratic state representative asked GOP Gov. Nikki Haley on Monday to increase security at the three clinics in South Carolina that provide abortions following last week's deadly shootings at a Planned Parenthood in Colorado.

"It doesn't matter whether you're pro-life or pro-choice, our focus right now should be to make sure what happened in Colorado Springs doesn't happen in South Carolina," said Rep. Mia McLeod of Columbia, a three-term House member who's running for an open Senate seat in 2016.

"We need increased security at South Carolina clinics now," she added, without being specific.

McLeod called on the governor to coordinate with state and local law enforcement to monitor clinics in Charleston, Columbia and Greenville.

Haley's office said the governor's already doing that. Of-

It doesn't matter whether you're pro-life or pro-choice, our focus right now should be to make sure what happened in Colorado Springs doesn't happen in South Carolina.

S.C. Rep. Mia McLeod

officials with the S.C. State Law Enforcement Division and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security have told Haley there are "no known threats" to Planned Parenthood in the Southeast, said her spokeswoman, Chaney Adams.

"The governor will continue to communicate with law enforcement to make sure we do everything we can to keep all South Carolinians safe, as violence is never acceptable in our state," Adams said.

Robert Dear, a 57-year-old former South Carolina resident, is accused of opening fire Friday at a clinic in Colorado Springs, Colorado, killing three people and injuring nine others. Colorado Springs po-

lice have declined to disclose any information on his motive.

"I'm afraid some of the rhetoric being tossed around by some South Carolina politicians may motivate someone here at home to try the same thing," McLeod said.

Her request comes a day before a House Oversight panel, on which she sits, holds its next hearing on abortion clinics in the state. The panel's investigation was among several launched by Republicans following the release last summer of secretly taped videos showing Planned Parenthood officials in other states discussing the collection of fetal organs for research.

Planned Parenthood officials have repeatedly said none of

the organization's clinics in the South Atlantic region — which includes the Carolinas, West Virginia and much of Virginia — participates in fetal tissue collection.

Of the three abortion clinics in South Carolina, Planned Parenthood operates only the one in Columbia.

In August, Haley asked the state's public health agency to investigate the clinics, starting with Planned Parenthood. Less than a month later, the Department of Health and Environmental Control suspended the licenses of two of the clinics and fined them a combined \$10,250. Ultimately, sanctions were lifted and neither had to close.



Title: **S.C. shoppers latest to pay taxes on purchases**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX The Associated Press
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AMAZON SALES

S.C. shoppers latest to pay taxes on purchases

BY SEANNA ADCOX
The Associated Press

A sales-tax break the Legislature gave Amazon in 2011 expires Jan. 1, making South Carolina the last state to collect among those where officials cut similar deals with the online retail giant.

Taxing Amazon's in-state sales could add tens of millions of dollars to South Carolina's coffers in 2016, said Max Behlke, the National Conference of State Legislatures' manager of state and federal relations.

State Revenue Director Rick

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AMAZON

did not return multiple phone and email messages.

South Carolina gave Amazon a 4½-year exemption from collecting sales taxes from its residents in exchange for creating at least 2,000 full-time jobs with health benefits and investing \$125 million by Dec. 31, 2013.

The law passed in June 2011 without the signature of Gov. Nikki Haley, whose vocal opposition nearly sank one of her predecessor's last big economic deals.

Gov. Mark Sanford's administration advocated extending to Amazon the five-year sales tax collection exemption that QVC

Reames declined to give estimates beyond saying, "We expect a significant increase in sales tax revenues."

For years, the Seattle-based company fought collecting sales taxes from its customers. The U.S. Supreme Court has twice ruled – in 1967 and 1992 – that a state can't require a company to collect and remit the tax unless it has a "physical presence" in the state.

As Amazon expanded, rather than collect taxes in states that

tried to force it, the company severed ties with affiliates and scrapped plans for distribution centers. South Carolina was among 10 states that gave Amazon a temporary tax reprieve in exchange for jobs and investment, Behlke said.

In all, South Carolina loses out on an estimated \$254 million in taxes from out-of-state sales – mostly online, but also through catalogues and phone purchases, according to a 2014 report by the National Confer-

ence of State Legislatures.

Behlke cautioned the number's not precise.

"No one knows the full amount states are losing," he said.

But on New Year's Day, South Carolina joins 26 states where Amazon, the heavyweight of online retailing, collects the tax, according to the company's website. Five states don't have sales taxes.

Spokespeople for Amazon

SEE AMAZON, 7A

received in 2006 to come to Florence.

But as details on the exemption emerged, opposition mounted. Haley left the decision to legislators while opposing it at meetings across the state, calling it bad policy that gives Amazon an unfair price advantage over retailers that must collect the tax.

Opponents included Tea Party activists, the state's small business chamber, and national retail chains that backed an anti-Amazon advertising campaign.

Amid the opposition, the House rejected the initial deal – which promised 1,249 jobs and a \$90

million investment. Amazon then announced it was abandoning its plans. Local legislators and elected officials launched their own public-relations campaign and Amazon upped its offer, leading to approval of the enhanced package.

How many workers Amazon currently employs in South Carolina is unclear.

The company self-reported to a state Commerce survey that it employs up to 1,500 people at the two distribution centers.

While Amazon doesn't yet collect taxes in South Carolina, by law shoppers are still responsible for paying the state what

they don't pay online.

As per its compromise with the Legislature, Amazon has emailed customers a yearly tally of what they've spent, reminding them they may owe the sales tax on their income tax returns.

But that information is not sent to Revenue, so many people ignore it.

Still, "use tax" collections increased from \$1.4 million in 2011 to \$4.1 million in 2013, the latest year available from the agency, which attributes the rise to awareness the emails generate.

Title: **S.C.shoppers latestto paytaxes on purchases**

Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX The AssociatedPress

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File photo/The State

Thousands of items are sorted and stored inside Amazon's West Columbia plant.

Title: **MONDAY, NOV. 30**
Author:
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BEST BETS

MONDAY, NOV. 30

>>> HOLIDAYS

49TH ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S CAR-OLIGHTING: 6 p.m. family festivities, 7 p.m. program start Monday at the State House. Gov. Nikki Haley and the first family kick off the holiday season with live performances and the lighting of the state Christmas tree. The event is open to the public. North steps of the State House downtown, Main and Gervais street.

Title: **Money matters: What S.C. should tax, spend**
 Author:
 Size: 118.11 square inch
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Money matters: What S.C. should tax, spend

Whether the economy is good or bad, tax revenues up or down, the perpetual question for governments — like individuals and businesses — is how to spend the money, and whether and how to generate more. Today, readers weigh in on South Carolina taxing and spending options.

We need to fix problems, not cut taxes

In the Nov. 15 article, “Budget windfall could kill gas tax,” the governor spoke of cutting taxes. Nowhere was there any mention of providing an even adequate education for the children of

FROM PAGE 1C

LETTERS

website, 95 percent were reelected in their last election cycle, including Gov. Nikki Haley.

Our pledge serves as a guarantee to voters that those candidates who proclaim to be conservative on fiscal matters and taxes actually remain conservative throughout their term. Also, our tax pledge gives candidates the flexibility to vote for some increased taxes, as long as there is an equal or greater decrease in some other tax or fee. This prevents the unchecked growth of government in general, which is why our nation is in the fiscal dilemma it's in.

Our pledge is no different than any other ad-

our state. Education in South Carolina is crying out for reform, yet our elected officials act as if ignoring this problem will make it go away. Meanwhile we continue to shortchange our state with an undereducated population.

Roads and education are not our only problems. Mental health and a shortage of social workers to investigate and support abused and neglected children come to mind among other concerns.

And the governor is worried about reducing taxes.

Republicans appear to me to want to cut services to the

poor while lining the wealthy's pockets with more money. Why is it those who profess to be so “Christian” appear to be so unkind?

— Katharine DuV. Beard
Camden

No-taxes pledge protects voters

Although my friend associate editor Cindy Ross Scoppe may not like our no-new-tax pledge (“Defeat of the pledgers? Maybe not, but let's work on that,” Nov. 8), it is very clear here in South Carolina that voters do. Of the 40 pledge signers on our

SEE LETTERS, 4C

vocacy group that promotes pledges in education or environmental issues: It's just a tool for voters to rely on when choosing a candidate.

— Don Weaver
President, S.C. Association of Taxpayers
Columbia

Leaders failing us on schools, infrastructure

The great flood of 2015 serves as a dramatic example of shortsighted policies of so many of our state politicians. For years the state inspection of the 2,300 most at-risk dams was funded at little more than \$100 per year per dam. Even when deficiencies were found, en-

forcement was lax. Saying we can't afford better care of our infrastructure is like saying I can't afford to put oil in my car, but I'll drive it anyway.

This is only one of many shortsighted policies. Underfunding road and bridge repairs is obvious. But all increases in expenditures the governor and Legislature have recommended are hundreds of millions of dollars less than what is required to bring our roads and bridges up to acceptable standards.

Our schools are short-changed every year by several hundred dollars per pupil below even the minimum amount re-

quired by our own state law. Yet our state leaders are willing to spend millions defending against lawsuits designed to force them to obey their own laws and their constitutional responsibility.

Our “leaders” must lead. They must explain to their constituents why money must be spent on education and infrastructure if our state is to progress and our people prosper.

— Bob Moore
Columbia

To fix schools, eliminate districts

The state Supreme Court, the Legislature, the school districts that sued the state — none of them

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has a clue. All the Legislature knows how to do is cut taxes.

The way to improve the schools is to eliminate the more than 80 school districts, along with nearly 1,000 school board members and all of their staffs. Fund the schools with a statewide tax; goodbye to the horse-and-buggy days.

The political consequences would be tough, but it is the right thing to do. I caught hell for doing away with the Richland County Board of Education and for helping merge

two school districts; I had the votes to merge Richland 1 and 2, but politics won out.

- Tom Elliott
Eastover

Money woes? Legalize hemp and cannabis

So Columbia needs \$100 million for the Columbia canal, broken in the October storm. More than likely we will go to Washington seeking relief instead of divorcing ourselves from archaic laws that stifle revenue within our own state.

Laws against hemp and cannabis need to be stricken from statutes quickly. To date, four states (Colorado, Washington, Oregon and Alaska) have removed those laws, and their citizens are reaping tremendous benefit, including a decrease in both crime and arrest rates. Another major benefit those states have seen is a massive bump in tax and fee revenues from cannabis businesses.

Colorado, a state similar in population to South Carolina, took in more

than \$70 million in taxes and licensing last year and is poised to see more than \$100 million this year. Throw into the mix hemp, cannabis' non-psychoactive cousin, and South Carolina could become a powerhouse of production, bringing with it thousands of jobs.

So we can either go ask our Uncle (Sam) if we can borrow a couple hundred million dollars, or scrap old laws, build a thriving economy, and fix our own infrastructure.

- Matt Casey
Columbia



TIM DOMINICK tdominick@thestate.com

Ashley McCall talks with her kindergartners in Lexington 1.

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Title: **8 weeks after floods: Roads getting fixed and mosquitoes are dying**
 Author: JEFFREY COLLINS ASSOCIATED PRESS
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8 weeks after floods: Roads getting fixed and mosquitoes are dying

JEFFREY COLLINS
 ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA - The Thanksgiving weekend marks eight weeks since historic rainfall flooded parts of South Carolina.

Many things are returning to normal after up to 2 feet of rain fell in areas from Columbia to the coast from Oct. 2 to 5. Nearly 90 percent of the roads closed at the height of the storm are back open. Debris cleanup is ending. Lawmakers have started hearings to figure out how to pay for repairs.

But many questions remain. An official damage estimate has not been released, and until that figure is known, Gov. Nikki Haley and many state lawmakers say it will be impossible to commit to an exact plan on how to pay for the flood. The deadline to apply for federal assistance is Dec. 4.

Here is a look at how things are progressing since the flood:

Mosquitoes

The swarms of mosquitoes pestering people in South Carolina have finally met their match—the cold weather.

The recent cold snap has killed off or forced into hibernation most of the mosquitoes who thrived in the pools of standing water, said Frank Carson, mosquito control manager for Charleston County.

Carson warned that if the weather turns back warm for a stretch before the next hard freeze, some of the bloodsuckers could return. The cold weather also prevents spraying, which can only be done with the temperature is above 50 degrees.

“You need some consistently freezing temperatures over time. They can be in so many places. You could have them in the larval stage in standing water and they still could survive and hatch off if it gets warmer,” Carson said.

The boom in mosquitoes because of the flooding was unprecedented. Charleston County typically gets 120 complaints about mosquitoes in October. This year, workers were called 840 times, Carson said.

Carson’s crews in an average October spray about 2,000 acres for mosquito larvae. This October, workers sprayed 78,000 acres.

Roads

Repairs to South Carolina roads are ahead of schedule.

In mid-October, the state Department of Transportation hoped to have just 86 highways and bridges still closed on Thanksgiving. Instead, there are just 69 closures—44 roads and 25 bridges. The DOT said it can’t do anything with 26 of those roads because they run

over dams where the owners haven’t decided what to do with the damaged structures.

DOT Secretary Christy Hall said she is proud of her crews, who have put in long hours over the past eight weeks.

“The SCDOT team has shown their dedication and commitment to the people of SC through their hard work and perseverance,” Hall said in an email.

Hall said last month she hoped to have a final estimate for how much damage to roads will cost. But she said this week that figure still isn’t finalized.

Agriculture

The weather was cruel in so many ways to South Carolina farmers this year.

A dry summer wiped out part of the corn crop. Then, just a few weeks before harvest, floods destroyed peanuts, cotton and other fall crops. The state Agriculture Department estimates direct losses to farmers at more than \$375 million.

The governor asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture this week to get crop insurance payments to farmers faster.

The flooding may have long-term effects as well. The water could have shifted soil and made fields unstable for heavy equipment. Perennial tree crops like peaches could be struggling with weeks of fully saturated soils making it hard to get nutrients and breeding mold.

Rainfall Records

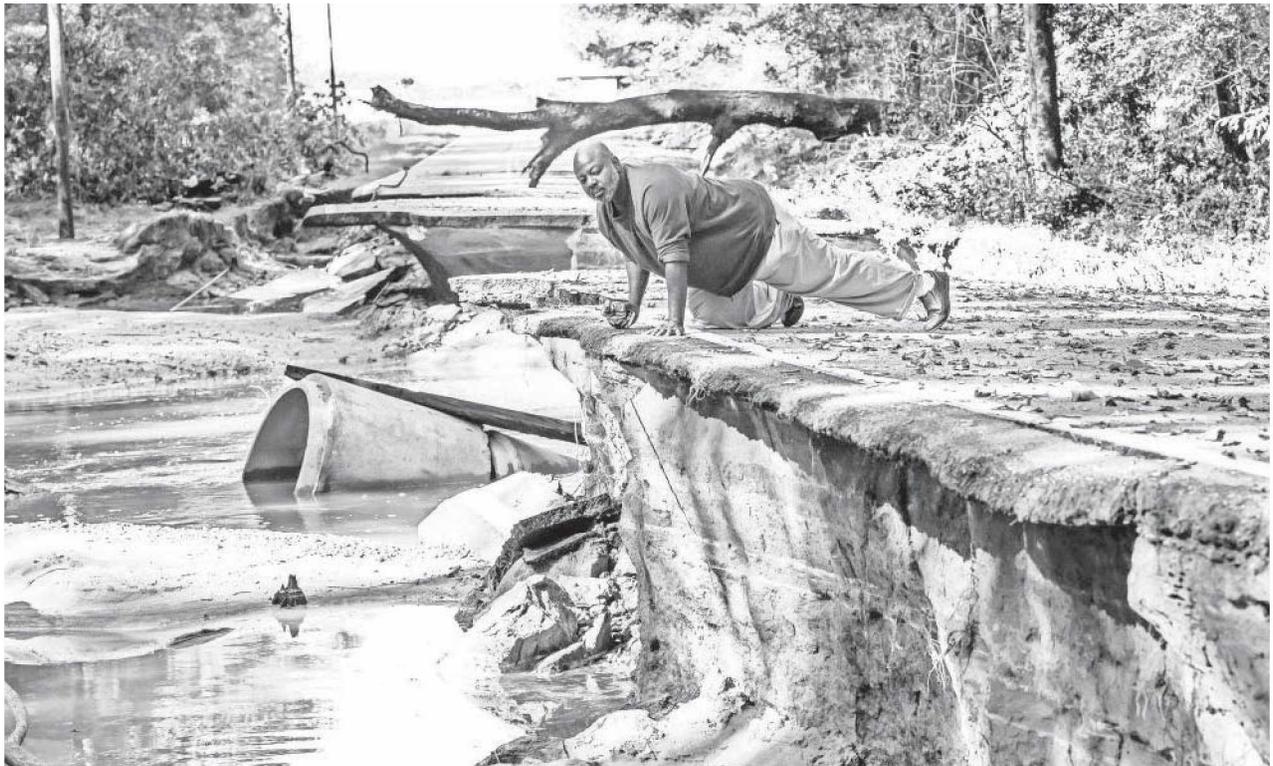
The rains in the state didn’t end with the floods. There have been several other heavy rain events this fall, although none has reached the magnitude of the massive floods.

This will be the wettest September through November in both Columbia and Charleston. Columbia has seen more than 26 inches of rain during meteorological fall, which is three times the normal amount. Charleston has had almost 30 inches of rain during the same period, which is more than 250 percent of normal rainfall, according to the Southeast Regional Climate Center.

While this likely won’t be the wettest year in recorded history for Columbia, Charleston still has a chance for its wettest year in 2015.

The official recording station at the airport in North Charleston has seen 71.75 inches of rain this year. The record is 72.99 inches in 1964. Normal rainfall is around 50 inches.

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SEAN RAYFORD/GETTY IMAGES

Trey McMillian looks over the damage done by flood waters on a road in Eastover on Oct. 6.

Title: **No evidence that refugees will put us at risk**

Author:

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No evidence that refugees will put us at risk

Gov. Nikki Haley stated that she wants to halt admission of Syrian refugees until she can be assured that the State Department's vetting process will prevent terrorists from entering the United States.

Since 2002, more than 125,000 refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan have been admitted to the United States. Thanks to the stringent vetting processes in place, no terrorist acts have been committed by these refugees. What more assurance could the State Department provide that our vetting process works?

Matthew Flege
Greenville

Title: **Pickens group backs no-refugees decisions**

Author:

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Pickens group backs no-refugees decisions

The Pickens County Taxpayers Association has for 20 years been involved in our principal areas of work: property rights and just taxation and related issues.

We care about the people of this county and state and work to enhance the health, safety, welfare and education of all those who live, work and raise families here.

We are concerned about the Federal Refugee Resettlement Initiative and potential increases in the numbers of people in this program and potential subsequent cost increases for Pickens County taxpayers for school, medical and welfare facilities.

In order to avoid a premature reaction to this important issue, much research and discussion were conducted by the Pickens County Taxpayers Association Board. Our findings, viewed in the light of current events and the lack of credible examination and vetting of refugees by federal authorities, are of paramount concern.

Therefore, we, as an Association, endorse the recent action of Gov. Nikki Haley asking that the U.S. State Department not resettle any Syrian refugees in South Carolina.

Our Association endorses the position of the Pickens County Council. It took action through a budget proviso that counties can participate or not in the Refugee Resettlement Program, and their decision was not to participate.

Our association will continue to work toward a safe and healthy place to live and work for our citizens.

Dan Winchester
Pickens

Dan Winchester is vice president of the Pickens County Taxpayers Association.

Title: **From Afghanistan to SC: A refugee's story**
 Author: By DEANNA PAN The Post and Courier of Charleston
 Size: 80.29 square inch
 Beaufort, SC Circulation: 11269



From Afghanistan to SC: A refugee's story

By DEANNA PAN

The Post and Courier of Charleston

COLUMBIA — Self-reliance. That's Noor Amiri's favorite part about American culture. "American people want to stand on their own feet. They don't want to rely on somebody else. Even the girl or boy — it doesn't matter," he said. "That's the good part for me."

And in many ways, 27-year-old Amiri embodies that up-from-your-bootstraps, Horatio Alger myth of hard work and survival. A few years ago, Amiri was an interpreter in his home country of Afghanistan, avoiding roadside IEDs in U.S. military convoys. Today, he's among 1,800 refugees who have resettled in South Carolina since 2002, striving for a better life for his family. In the wake of the Nov. 13 massacre in Paris, committed by Islamic State militants, President Barack Obama has reaffirmed his plan to welcome 85,000 refugees, including 10,000 Syrians, to the United States next year. Meanwhile, a slew of Republican governors, including South Carolina's Nikki Haley, a former supporter of Syrian resettlement, have vowed to ban them from their states for fear of terrorists masquerading as refugees, fleeing from civil war and persecution.

On Thursday, the House of Representatives passed a bill suspending the resettlement program for Syrian and Iraqi refugees unless national security agencies can prove they pose no risk, making

Please see REFUGEE on 4A

REFUGEE

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an already rigorous vetting process nearly impossible to clear.

The furor confounds Amiri.

"Those people are suffering from war, from injustice, from cruelty so we need to help them. We need to be open-minded," he said. "Human beings are related. We need each other's help."

A 'FAMOUS' FACE

Amiri grew up in Kabul, Afghanistan's capital city. His father was a truck driver

while his mother tended to their 10 children. Amiri was just a boy when the Taliban seized Kabul. He was a teenager when U.S.-led forces drove the Taliban out. He learned English at private language institute in the city, became fascinated with American culture. When he found out the U.S. Army and NATO were hiring Afghan interpreters, he jumped at the chance to apply.

In 2009, at the age of 21, he was hired by the Army, first as an instructor for the Af-

ghan National Army, teaching soldiers how to drive safely in convoy, and later, an interpreter for Afghan and American special forces. In that role, Amiri worked alongside troops, gathering intelligence from villagers and their elders about enemy movement. It was a challenging, dangerous job. Amiri once watched a Humvee explode on the road in front of him. And through his work, Amiri said, his "face was kind of famous."

"It was very, very difficult to protect ourselves, especially when we're traveling outside the bases or outside the job," he said. "We were listening on the radios that (translators) are the first target for them."

In June 2011, Obama announced that 33,000 American troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the summer of 2012. As the war started to wind down, Amiri said he got

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nervous. He thought of his new wife, Mina, and their a 1-year-old son, Mustafa.

"I felt I can't give him everything in Afghanistan because I was in danger," Amiri said.

At the end of 2012, Amiri applied for refugee status. Four months later, he found out his application was denied; he didn't submit a piece of paperwork. Amiri tried again, but this time, through the Special Immigrant Visa program, available to Iraqi and Afghan translators who served with the armed forces. Eight months later, at the end of 2013, the U.S. Embassy granted his visa. It was official: Amiri and his family were moving to the other side of the world.

A NEW LIFE

On June 24, 2014, Amiri and his family landed in the United States. The trip, Amiri said, was "long and boring." His wife was seven months pregnant. His son was an antsy 3-year-old.

At JFK International Airport in New York, they were greeted by staff from the International Organization for Migration. That's when Amiri learned where they were headed: Columbia, S.C.

Amiri expected to stay in New York or go to Virginia, California or Texas, states where he'd heard other Afghan families had been resettled. He'd never heard of Columbia.

"I was saying, 'No, I don't want to go! I don't know anyone there! I'm going to be by my own self!' My wife and

kids, they needed someone to talk to them and welcome them," Amiri recalls. "There was not any other option."

It was almost midnight when they arrived in Columbia. Staff from Lutheran Services Carolinas picked his family up at the airport. The next morning, they drove them to their new home, a small apartment facing the woods on Broad River Road.

THE BACKLASH

For more than two decades, Lutheran Community Services was the only agency in South Carolina resettling refugees, between 150 and 200 every year from such countries as Myanmar, Bhutan, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan and Iraq. Then, this past spring, another faith-based refugee resettlement organization, World Relief, opened a branch in Spartanburg.

That's when the backlash started.

The phone in Lindsey Seawell's office at Lutheran Church of the Reformation started to ring every week. Anonymous callers would ask Seawell, a refugee services coordinator for LSC, not to resettle any Syrians. They'd ask her if she could "send people back." They'd tell her they "don't want any Muslims to come," Seawell said, and she would calmly explain: "'We gladly welcome them,' and they usually don't like that answer."

"Honestly, I think for me personally, what I believe is that we are to love the strang-

er and sojourner and we are to care for them," she said. "My motivation is my faith and what I believe God has asked me to do, and how he's asked me to live my life."

Religious nonprofits such as LSC contract with the federal government to provide services to refugees. LSC helps newly arrived families obtain housing, arrange doctor appointments, enroll in social service programs, learn to use public transportation and apply for jobs.

"The entire overarching goal of refugee resettlement," Seawell said, "is self-sufficiency."

The federal government provides resettlement agencies only \$925 per refugee to help pay for rent, food and other supplies for the first 30 days. LSC relies on volunteers, who donate mattresses, pillows, blankets and kitchen tables, to make up the difference.

After one year, refugees can apply for a green card. After five years, they can apply for citizenship.

"Moving to the U.S. is like taking 10 steps backwards. You don't know the culture and the language. The education and experience you have doesn't always translate in our context. Often refugees think their life will be easier," Seawell said. "Focusing on the freedom and safety they have I think that's what keeps them going."

'STAND ON YOUR OWN FEET'

The first months in Columbia were difficult for

Amiri and his family. Mina was heavily pregnant. They didn't have a car. They missed the markets in Kabul. They longed for families and friends.

Amiri reminded himself: "It's going to get easier and easier until you can stand on your own feet."

Through LSC, Amiri and his wife met other Afghan families. Amiri found his own job, working the night shift at CarMax as a detailer. He's told his bosses he'd eventually like to become a mechanical associate. His wife, meanwhile, is studying with an English tutor at LCS while taking care of their children, including their infant son, Mujtaba or "Yama" for short.

They moved to a new apartment, where the rent is cheaper. They went on a short vacation this summer to Folly Beach. They like visiting Columbia's Statehouse, their local mosque, parks, barbecue restaurants and zoo — "one of the top 10 in U.S."

Most of all, Amiri loves how safe he feels that he's no longer in danger.

"It was my fortune or destiny— we say 'faith' — to come here in South Carolina," he said. "Right now, I am satisfied."

"The entire overarching goal of refugee resettlement is self-sufficiency."

Lindsey Seawell, a refugee services coordinator, Lutheran Services Carolinas



Title: **Atlantic Coast cities rise up against plans**
 Author: By SEAN COCKERH AM McClatchy Washington Bureau
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OFFSHORE DRILLING

Atlantic Coast cities rise up against plans

By SEAN COCKERHAM

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — As the Obama administration prepares to open the Atlantic Ocean to oil and gas drilling for the first time in decades, the coast is in rebellion.

Governments in more than 70 cities and counties in the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida have passed resolutions opposing oil exploration or drilling off their coasts, pushing the president to reverse course and keep drilling rigs from the Eastern seaboard.

The latest protest against Obama's plan came from the seaside town of Swansboro, N.C., which passed a resolution last week opposing offshore drilling.

"The risks are very real," said Frank Tursi, newly elected to the town's board of commissioners.

Obama's January announcement that he is proposing a drilling lease sale in the Atlantic has ignited a furious debate over energy, jobs and

the environment, with governors of East Coast states eager for development but many coastal towns afraid of the potential impact on tourism and fishing.

Drilling opponents along the Atlantic coast feel emboldened by Obama's decision last month to cancel drilling lease sales far to the north in the Arctic Ocean.

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COAST

Continued from 1A

They see a potential opening as the president becomes more assertive on environmental issues as he prepares to leave office after next year's election.

"For the life of me I just can't understand why this is even an issue. Tourism generates so much money to the state, it's basically the lifeblood of eastern North Carolina," said Matt Price, a real estate developer in North Carolina's Outer Banks. "I doubt people want to come to a place where oil washed up on the beaches or there's dead sea life from seismic testing."

Coastal drilling opponents are fighting an uphill battle, though — against their own governors and senators who support offshore drilling and would protest if Obama abandoned the plan. Republican North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory is pressing for the state to get a share of the federal money from offshore energy production, telling Congress this year that there

is "widespread support" in North Carolina for offshore drilling.

"Governor McCrory continues to support a multi-faceted energy strategy that will create jobs and help with our country's energy independence," McCrory spokesman Graham Wilson said this past week. "The governor's first goal is to find out what resources are available in a safe, environmentally responsible way."

Obama has opened a huge area of the Atlantic, from Delaware to central Florida, for seismic exploration for oil and natural gas. Those tests, in which seismic cannons repeatedly blast as loud as a howitzer under the sea, could begin as soon as the spring once federal permits are issued.

It's not clear how much oil and gas there is off the Eastern seaboard and the tests are meant to change that. The seismic cannons will blast compressed air under-

water, sending sound waves to the bottom of the ocean that produce echoes to be used by industry to map oil and gas deposits.

Oil companies will use the data to decide whether to bid on Atlantic drilling leases. The president proposes a 2021 drilling lease sale off the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Georgia, areas long closed to fossil fuel development. Governors of all those states support the drilling.

All major coastal cities in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia are against the drilling plan, though — with resolutions of opposition from Wilmington, N.C., Myrtle Beach, Charleston, Hilton Head Island, Savannah and dozens of smaller towns. Similar resolutions have been passed by cities in Florida, Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland and Delaware.

"Every coastal municipality in South Carolina is now on board (with the opposition)," Billy Keyserling,

mayor of Beaufort, said at a recent meeting in Washington organized by the environmental group Oceana.

Keyserling said the U.S. already has a glut of cheap oil from the fracking boom. "We don't need to take these kinds of risks."

U.S. Reps. Mark Sanford and Tom Rice, Republicans who represent the South Carolina coast, also oppose Atlantic offshore drilling, as does Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C. All four U.S. senators from North and South Carolina support drilling, though, as does Republican South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley.

Not everyone along the Carolina coast is opposed to drilling. Carteret County, N.C., which is between Wilmington and the Outer Banks, bucked the anti-drilling tide this month with a resolution in support of McCrory's push for oil and gas exploration off the state's coast.

Swansboro, N.C., Commissioner Jim Allen also supports offshore drilling, al-



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though his fellow town commissioners outvoted him 3-1 on the issue.

“I think if we’ve got gas or oil out there then I don’t see anything wrong with us drilling for it,” Allen said in an interview. “I am all for doing anything to create jobs.”

Allen lost his re-election race this month. So did Dean Lambeth, mayor of Kure Beach, N.C., who drew hundreds of protesters when he supported oil and gas exploration last year.

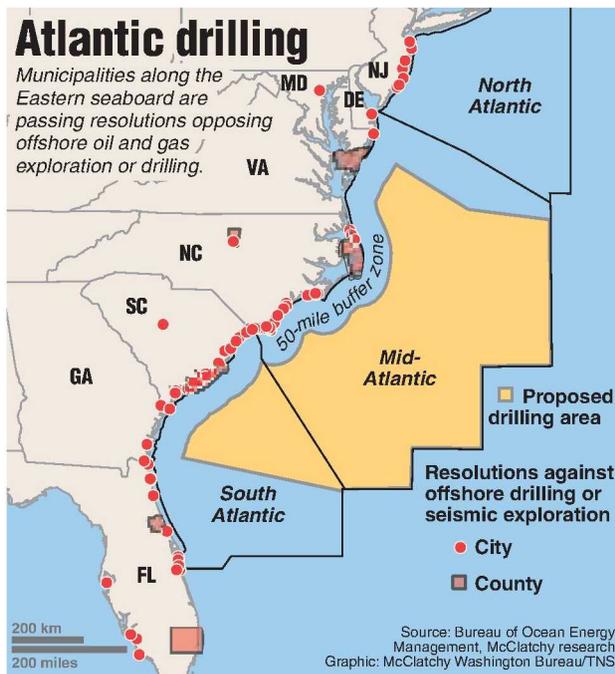
“A lot of my campaign was based on opposing seismic

testing and offshore oil,” said Emilie Swearingen, who defeated Lambeth in the mayor’s race. “We have dozens and dozens and dozens of ‘do not drill’ signs all over our town.”

Swearingen said the anti-drilling resolutions prove

that coastal opposition is strong and now it is a matter of convincing the rest of North Carolina.

“We need to get the word out to the Piedmont and the mountains,” she said.



Title: **MOSQUITOES**
 Author:
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MOSQUITOES

The swarms of mosquitoes pestering people in South Carolina have finally met their match – the cold weather.

The recent cold snap has killed off or forced into

FROM PAGE 1C

FLOOD

bloodsuckers could return. The cold weather also prevents spraying, which can only be done with the temperature is above 50 degrees.

“You need some consistently freezing temperatures over time. They can be in so many places. You could have them in the larval stage in standing water and they still could survive and hatch off if it gets warmer,” Carson said.

The boom in mosquitoes because of the flooding was unprecedented. Charleston County typically gets 120 complaints about mosquitoes in October. This year, workers were called 840 times, Carson said.

Carson’s crews in an average October spray about 2,000 acres for mosquito larvae. This October, workers sprayed 78,000 acres.

ROADS

Repairs to South Carolina

hibernation most of the mosquitoes who thrived in the pools of standing water, said Frank Carson, mosquito control manager for Charleston County.

Carson warned that if the

weather turns back warm for a stretch before the next hard freeze, some of the

SEE FLOOD, 3C

roads are ahead of schedule.

In mid-October, the state Department of Transportation hoped to have just 86 highways and bridges still closed on Thanksgiving.

Instead, there are just 69 closures – 44 roads and 25 bridges. The DOT said it can’t do anything with 26 of those roads because they run over dams where the owners haven’t decided what to do with the damaged structures.

DOT Secretary Christy Hall said she is proud of her crews, who have put in long hours over the past eight weeks.

“The SCDOT team has shown their dedication and commitment to the people

of SC through their hard work and perseverance,” Hall said in an email.

Hall said last month she hoped to have a final estimate for how much damage to roads will cost. But she said this week that figure still isn’t finalized.

AGRICULTURE

The weather was cruel in so many ways to South Carolina farmers this year.

A dry summer wiped out part of the corn crop. Then, just a few weeks before harvest, floods destroyed peanuts, cotton and other fall crops. The state Agriculture Department estimates direct losses to farmers at more than \$375 million.

The governor asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture this week to get crop insurance payments to farmers faster.

The flooding may have long-term effects as well. The water could have shifted soil and made fields unstable for heavy equipment. Perennial tree crops like peaches could be struggling with weeks of fully saturated soils making it hard to get nutrients and breeding mold.

RAINFALL RECORDS

The rains in the state

didn’t end with the floods. There have been several other heavy rain events this fall, although none has reached the magnitude of the massive floods.

This will be the wettest September through November in both Columbia and Charleston. Columbia has seen more than 26 inches of rain during meteorological fall, which is three times the normal amount. Charleston has had almost 30 inches of rain during the same period, which is more than 250 percent of normal rainfall, according to the Southeast Regional Climate Center.

While this likely won’t be the wettest year in recorded history for Columbia, Charleston still has a chance for its wettest year in 2015.

The official recording station at the airport in North Charleston has seen 71.75 inches of rain this year. The record is 72.99 inches in 1964. Normal rainfall is around 50 inches.

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A North Myrtle Beach resident photographs the flooding on Duffy Street.