



Item
Sumter, SC
Circ. 19018
From Page:
1
3/19/2015
67039



148 Audit shows S.C. State will owe \$23.5M

BY SEANNA ADCOX

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina State University's escalating debt is expected to reach \$23.5 million by the end of this school year, adding to calls for an immediate overhaul.

An accounting firm pre-

sented a financial forecast Wednesday that's even worse than lawmakers expected. South Carolina's

only public historically black university cannot reduce its unpaid bills without additional aid from the state, Tom McNeish of auditing firm Elliott Davis Decosimo told the Budget and Control Board, which

hired his firm last year.

Gov. Nikki Haley said the school's survival depends on leadership being willing to make deep cuts.

"South Carolina State is on life support," she said. "Something has to be done now. We've got to see

action yesterday."

The financial oversight board she chairs postponed

deciding whether to extend S.C. State's loan repayment plan. A \$6 million loan approved last spring is supposed to be paid back by June 30. But if it is repaid, the school won't be able to pay any of its vendors, and unpaid bills will climb to \$22 million, McNeish said.

SEE **AUDIT**, PAGE A5



Item
Sumter, SC
Circ. 19018
From Page:
5
3/19/2015
67039



AUDIT

FROM PAGE A1

The accruing debt also includes \$1.5 million the school received as part of a second bailout approved last December.

The board delayed action after House Ways and Means Chairman Brian White, a board member, criticized the lack of written repayment terms on which to vote. The five-member panel will revisit the issue next month.

Support for an extension will require noticeable action by the school's leaders, Haley said.

"There has to be a team that goes into this school and makes serious decisions. ... It's going to need to cut regardless of how long an employee's been there," she said. "If we see that in a 30-day window, you can see some success. If you see slow-walking and hands out just wanting money for the sake of it, I don't think it makes it."

The presentation came two days after S.C. State's trustees fired President Thomas Elzey.

Also on Wednesday, the House approved a bill firing all trustees, as well as Elzey. The proposal matches what the House

put in its budget plan last week. But a budget clause can't take effect until July 1, and lawmakers want trustees replaced much sooner. How soon will depend on the House and Senate working out differences in their separate plans — chiefly, who appoints the takeover board.

"Time is of the essence," said Rep. Jerry Govan, D-Orangeburg, an S.C. State graduate. "I don't believe we have a margin for error."

The House's budget proposal for the upcoming fiscal year includes \$4 million to pay off some of S.C. State's oldest bills.

More than 40 percent of its bills, or \$4.4 million worth, are more than four months past due, according to a Feb. 28 breakdown from the oversight board.

The school's fiscal woes stem from a yearslong decline in enrollment, partly





Item
Sumter, SC
Circ. 19018
From Page:
5
3/19/2015
67039



because of students losing federal aid amid the Great Recession and federal changes during the past six years in eligibility for Pell grants and PLUS loans. Meanwhile, spending continued as if revenues hadn't changed.

A subcommittee of S.C. State's board recently recommended \$3 million in cuts by trimming programs and staff. The plan is similar to one Elzey proposed earlier this year.

S.C. State's acting president, W. Franklin Evans, said school leaders recognize "we can't continue to be everything to everyone," but the school can't cut itself out of business.

"Clearly, we're needing the state to step in and provide the funding so that we can eliminate that debt and pay our vendors," he said. "Really, that's the only way."



McCormick
Messenger
McCormick, SC
Circ. 2455
From Page:
3
3/19/2015
66189



148 Republicans to reorganize precincts

Submitted by Ruth Obermeyer

On March 26 at 7 p.m. the McCormick County Republican Party will hold precinct reorganization at the Chamber of Commerce Office. Please remember to bring your voter registration card with you. It is important for identification. What is precinct reorganization you ask? Precinct reorganization is a framework for the organization of the South Carolina Republican Party. You could say it is the grassroots activity of the state party. During precinct reorganization voting members of each voting precinct in the county come together to elect precinct officers and delegates to the county convention. Each precinct elects a precinct president to serve on the county executive committee. Precincts can also pass resolutions which can be brought to the county executive committee. If approved by the vote of the executive committee it is then taken to the state executive committee by the county state executive committeeman. For example: the state executive committee recently approved six different resolutions. Among them were several very important policy issues. One was in support of Governor Haley's tax reform plan which will bring about one of the largest tax cuts in state history. Also, a resolution was passed that urges the General Assembly and the Governor to be in compliance with Act 171 which would fully fund the Local Government Fund which has

fallen \$343,780,410 short during fiscal years 2008-2015. The party also passed a resolution in support of closed primaries and a resolution regarding an Article V Convention of States for the purpose of proposing amendments to the Constitution of the United States that would impose fiscal restraints on the federal government, limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government and limit the terms of office for its officials and for members of Congress.

By taking an active part in the local Republican Party you can have a voice in what the South Carolina Republican Party stands for. That is how grassroots politics works.

The county convention will be held April 9 in the Bordeaux Room at Hickory Knob State Resort Park at 6 p.m. The delegates to the county convention, elected at the precinct reorganization, will elect county officers and four delegates and alternates to the state convention which will be held May 2 in Columbia.

As a special tribute the Robin Strom Award will be presented to the co-founder of the McCormick County Republican Party, Norma Curtis. We will have more information on the county convention at a later date.

Please plan to attend precinct reorganization March 26 (don't forget to bring your voter registration card) and the county convention on April 9.



People-Sentinel
Barnwell, SC
Circ. 6702
From Page:
3
3/25/2015
66057



The People-Sentinel • Wednesday, March 25, 2015 • 3A

Haley doesn't want to change waste plan for nuclear dump

JEFFREY COLLINS
The Associated Press

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley is against the possibility of opening a Barnwell County landfill to low-level nuclear waste from across the country, saying she wants to make sure the state isn't spoiled for its children or grandchildren.

Haley said she isn't changing her personal mission to be known as the "jobs governor." But she said some jobs — such as those that might be generated by this proposal — aren't worth it.

"We don't sell our soul for jobs and money," Haley said Thursday at a news conference she called to discuss

the issue.

Haley was responding to talk around the Statehouse

talk around the Statehouse about adding states to the list that can now send low-level radioactive materials from hospitals and power plants to the Energy Solutions landfill run by Chem-Nuclear in Barnwell County.

Legislators voted in 2000 to only accept waste from South Carolina, New Jersey and Connecticut until the site is full or until 2023, and rejected an effort to change that deal eight years ago.

Sen. Brad Hutto, whose district contains the landfill, said the governor is jumping the gun because she hasn't seen his proposal. The Orangeburg

Democrat said he is writing a bill so lawmakers can debate what to do with the site. He said a periodic review of the landfill and

how it operates is good policy, especially since it is still taking waste and he has no plans to increase the dump's capacity.

"Nothing is going to change about whether the future of our children is affected. It's there, it is going

to be monitored in the long term," Hutto said.

Energy Solutions spokesman Mark Walker said the company was disappointed in the governor's comments, but looked forward to working with her and legislators on the future of the landfill. The firm does have a website at <http://truthaboutbarnwell.com/> where it makes its case that the people of Barnwell County are fine



People-Sentinel
Barnwell, SC
Circ. 6702
From Page:
3
3/25/2015
66057



"I'm not willing to go and take in nuclear waste our kids and grandkids might have to deal with."

- Gov. Nikki Haley

on the possibility of opening a Barnwell County landfill to low-level nuclear waste from across the country

with the landfill and it operates safely.

Haley said she spoke to the company before making her decision.

"I'm not willing to go and take in nuclear waste our kids and grandkids might have to deal with," she said.

But Hutto said that is shortsighted. The landfill is at 87 percent capacity and will keep taking waste until it is full. Part of any new deal could bring in more money for the state for other environmental projects. And he wants to revisit why the landfill can accept low-level radioactive waste from New Jersey and not Pennsylvania.

"They've been a good cor-

porate citizen in Barnwell," Hutto said of Energy Solutions. "And the people of Barnwell deserve to have this heard and considered."

Haley's stance brought praise from groups that often criticize her. Conservation Voters of South Carolina Director Ann Timberlake gave the governor significant grief last month when she thought her nominee to run the state's health and environmental agency was unqualified. That nominee eventually withdrew.

On Thursday, Timberlake said in a written statement that Haley showed she had the best interests of South Carolina and its environment in mind.



Jasper County
Sun
Ridgeland, SC
Circ. 1950
From Page:
1
3/18/2015
65216



174 + 148

Residents: Clean up that trash

Advocates aim to end litter problem

BY GENELLE B. WILLIAMS

Jasper County Sun Times
genelle.williams@morris.com

Ridgeland is known for its beautiful Live Oak trees gracing the sides of the road and during the warmer months tourists detour off Interstate 95 to fuel up and drive around marveling at the evergreens.

But the county and town's constant struggle to keep trash off the side of the roads poses a threat to maintaining the historic allure.

Truett Vaigneur, 75, has lived in his Calf Pen Bay Road home for 35 years and said he has noticed the litter problem has gotten worse over time.

He said one day he just finally decided to do something about it.

"I wanted to clean it up, so I did," Vaigneur said. "So I go out every day now, I take up whatever somebody throws down."

Calf Pen Bay Road, just outside of Ridgeland town limits, is just one snapshot of how bad the litter problem has become.

Egg crates, used Styrofoam meat packaging from grocery stores, plastic bottles and paper products from fast food restaurants are scattered along the gutters.

Any passerby would notice the potential of a peaceful drive if there weren't so much trash on the ground.

Well, just think about the people who live there.

Vaigneur said with the help of his brothers and sisters, who live nearby, and Jasper Fire-Rescue, they conducted a property burning a month ago to help get rid of the trash piling up on their properties.

"Well we burned both sides of the road first. We had a lot of help and I needed a lot of help," Vaigneur said. "And when I got through burning



Jasper County
Sun
Ridgeland, SC
Circ. 1950
From Page:
1
3/18/2015
65216



Genelle B. Williams/Jasper County Sun Times

Truett Vaigneur said most of the trash he picks up are food containers from nearby fast food restaurants and aluminum cans and bottles.

then I started cleaning and boy I mean I cleaned. I got well over 40 buckets.”

Each bucket collects five gallons of trash each and the area where Vaigneur cleans up is about three quarters of a mile long.

His sister Mary Daley lives closer to Ridgeland town limits on U.S. 278 and said she also has problems with people littering on her property.

SEE TRASH, PAGE 4





Jasper County
Sun
Ridgeland, SC
Circ. 1950
From Page:
4
3/18/2015
65216



Trash

FROM PAGE 1

"I've lived there for 42 years, it was bad for trash and you know what we figured out?" Daley said. "They bought their food in Ridgeland, ate it, put it away, and then was finished by the time they got to our place and just tossed it out."

Daley said she believes it is a combination of tourists and residents contributing to the litter problem and people should take more responsibility in keeping the lands clean.

"But you think about it. This is home, you know, and somebody dirtied it up," Daley said.

On the other side of town is Bees Creek resident Tina Robinson who said she's also had enough of people treating her hometown like a garbage can.

"Anyone walking down the street can see the increase in trash," Robinson said. "If you look out the window it looks like we're living on a trash heap and I don't want the kids getting accustomed to this. We need to do something."

The state is also dealing with trash. In February, Gov. Nikki Haley said there's too much trash on roadsides, but the Department of Corrections has increased collections.

According to the Associated Press, Corrections Agency Director Bryan Stirling said there are more inmate crews collecting litter and more people per crew.



Photos by Genelle B. Williams/Jasper County Sun Times

Jasper resident Truett Vaigneur, 75, picks up buckets full of litter everyday along Calf Pen Bay Road and has even done a trash burning on his property in hopes of beautifying the area. Vaigneur said community help is greatly needed to clean up the county.



There is a stark contrast between the cleaned up Vaigneur property and the littered gutters at the entrance of Calf Pen Bay Road leading to U.S. 278.

Recently the teams collected 14,000 bags of litter, compared to 10,000 bags during January.

The town of Ridgeland has taken several initiatives to combat the litter problem, creating the anti-litter commission with Carmen Malphrus serving as chair for the committee.

A new ordinance has been proposed to suggest businesses and restaurants within town limits supply customers with trash cans at the front of the store.

The council has stated in previous meetings that one reason why people litter could be due to the lack of garbage cans visible around town.

Vaigneur said he believes the proposed ordinance would help cut down on trash, but in the meantime, people should take some self-responsibility.

"I believe they litter mostly by habit," Vaigneur said. "But if they made it a habit not to litter and just keep their trash in a little bag in the car, they should start doing that."



Lancaster News
Lancaster, SC
Circ. 12696
From Page:
1
3/22/2015
62165



6.5 PERCENT TO 7.3 PERCENT 148

Jobless rate shows slight increase

Denyse Clark

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Lancaster County's unemployment rate in January increased slightly to 7.3 percent, up from 6.5 percent in December 2014, according to a release this week from the S.C. Department of Employment Workforce.

The county's registered labor force is 34,730 workers, and of that total, 32,204 people were employed in January. As a result, a little more than 2,500 were unemployed.

The state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate held steady at 6.6 percent in January showing no change from the revised December bench-

marked estimate, the DEW report said.

The unemployment rate has remained steady over the past four months, while employment and labor force estimates

continue to expand.

"The number of unemployed persons was 146,989, marking little change since December 2014," the report said. "Nation-

ally, the unemployment rate in January 2015 was little changed at 5.7 percent."

DEW executive director Cheryl Stanton shared vital information about the state's overall employment situation at the beginning of the year.

"January marks the 62nd consecutive month of employment growth in South Caroli-

na. All of South Carolina should celebrate as the state's economy continues to expand and add jobs," she said. "As a state, we must also work more strategically to align available workers with the more than 70,000 available jobs. Governor Haley's Succeed SC plan that will train the state's workforce in

See **JOBLESS I Page 3A**





Lancaster News
Lancaster, SC
Circ. 12696
From Page:
4
3/22/2015
62165



Jobless

>>FROM 1A

high-demand jobs will do just that.”

Although the unemployment rate increased in Lancaster during January, the county wasn't alone.

In neighboring Ches-

ter County, the unemployment rate was at 9.5 percent in January, up from 7.9 percent in December 2014.

However, in York County, the unemployment rate remained almost unchanged in January at 6.5 percent from a 6.9 percent unemployment rate the previous December.

The highest unemploy-

ment in the state for January was in Allendale County with 13.2 percent, while the lowest unemployment was Lexington County with 5.5 percent.

The unemployment data for February will be released March 27.

Contact reporter Denyse Clark at (803) 283-1152 or follow on Twitter @DenyseTLN



Lancaster News
Lancaster, SC
Circ. 12696
From Page:
6
3/18/2015
62165



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S.C. veterans unemployment rate drops for second year

S.C. Department of
Employment and Workforce

South Carolina's unemployment rate for veterans 18 and older dropped to 3.5 percent in 2014, down from 4.1 percent in 2013, the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics reported. The Palmetto State posted the nation's seventh best rate and is well below the national rate of 5.3 percent.

"We are a proud military state. We support the families of those who are deployed, and we take care of our veterans and help them find work

"There are now more South Carolinians working than ever, and we are proud to help those who have so graciously served our country find employment opportunities in the Palmetto State," said Cheryl M. Stanton, executive director of the S.C. DEW. "Our team continues to work one-on-one with veterans every day and is cultivating relationships with businesses to market veterans as great hires."

Today's announcement comes nearly a year after the launch of Operation Palmetto

when they come home," Gov. Nikki Haley said. "Working together with businesses, the military community and workforce partners, we are expanding opportunities for those heroes who sacrifice so much for our families, and we couldn't be prouder to celebrate another drop in our military veterans' unemployment rate."

In the past year, more than 9,000 S.C. veterans were placed in jobs, according to the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW).

Employment, a statewide initiative led by Gov. Haley, in partnership with the S.C. National Guard and S.C. DEW. The comprehensive employment program is designed to help service members, family members and veterans find meaningful civilian careers.

Learn more about employment resources for veterans at www.operationpalmettoemployment.sc.gov.

To find an SC Works center for employment opportunities near you, visit www.dew.sc.gov/directory.

News &
Reporter
Chester, SC
Circ. 6700
From Page:
i4
3/18/2015
62090



FFA student officers attending State Legislators Appreciation Day were, from left to right, Jack Counterman, Ren Beam, Jared Houser and Randy Huffstetler.

PHOTO PROVIDED

234 + 148 FFA members attend Legislators Appreciation Day

From release

Chester County FFA student officers attended the S.C. FFA-sponsored State Legislators Appreciation Day in Columbia on Wednesday, Feb. 25. The students were Jack Counterman, Ren Beam, Jared Houser and Randy Huffstetler.

The students, accompanied by Thomas M. Beam, agricultural education instructor and FFA advisor at the Chester County Career Center, began the day by visiting with State Senator Creighton Coleman and State Representatives Greg Delleney and

MaryGail Douglas to thank them for their support of agricultural education. They were introduced to the members of the House of Representatives while in session by Reps. Delleney and Douglas.

Following the visits, the group braved the cold and weather to join the hundreds of FFA members and advisors from throughout S.C. on the north steps of the State Capitol for a special recognition ceremony. South Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers presented the Governor's Proclamation to the state FFA officers on behalf of Gov. Haley. This was in recognition of National FFA Week, Feb. 21-28, 2015. The week of George Washington's

birthday was designated as National FFA Week in 1947 at a National FFA Board of Directors meeting

The FFA positively influences the young people of America by developing character and leadership skills, and preparing members for successful careers. FFA members are the leaders of tomorrow. Through agricultural education and hands-on learning, FFA members are preparing for more than 300 career opportunities in the food, fiber and natural resources industries of agriculture. With more than 610,000 members, the organization has a history of service and a legacy of leadership.



Country
Chronicle
Blythewood, SC
Circ. 12261
From Page:
4
3/19/2015
61440



148

Governor speaks to BHS Republicans

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley recently visited Blythewood High School to speak to the Teenage Republicans Club about leadership, service and issues facing the state.

Haley was invited by freshman Will Galloway, founder and chairman of the BHS Teenage Republicans.

After the governor spoke, she answered questions, and received gifts made by students.

At right: Will Galloway with the governor; below: Haley with club members.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ERIN GALLOWAY





Free Times
Columbia, SC
Circ. 36854
From Page:
3
3/25/2015
61438



148 + 225

Jim Webb, Other Dems Dip Toes in S.C. Presidential Water

By Eva Moore

While likely Republican presidential candidates like Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker (who appeared with Gov. Nikki Haley last week) are sucking up a lot of the air in early-primary South Carolina, Democratic contenders are making more understated forays into the state.

"We're having some folks on the other side start to show up and have those kinds of conversations," says Jaime Harrison, chair of the South Carolina Democratic Party.

The state's primary is traditionally the first in the South, following the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary, and is thus a key campaign stop for potential presidential contenders.

One of those possible contenders, former Democratic U.S. Sen. Jim Webb of Virginia, arrived in Columbia last week with a guy

continues on page 10



Free Times
Columbia, SC
Circ. 36854
From Page:
4
3/25/2015
61438



named Mudcat Saunders in tow. Saunders is a Southern Democratic guru of sorts, the guy who co-wrote 2006's *Foxes in the Henhouse: How the Republicans Stole the South and the Heartland and What the Democrats Must Do to Run 'em Out* and served as a senior adviser to John Edwards — and his presence says quite a bit about Webb's populist approach to Democratic politics.

Of course, Webb isn't yet saying whether he'll run, but he says he's planning to spend lots of time in the Palmetto State.

One of his key goals, he says, is "to redefine the relationships in the American South, particularly between working white people and the Democratic Party."

"There should be no reason at all that Democrats are losing the votes of people who are working so hard and who could see the value of the philosophy of the Democratic Party," he says. "And in the past eight years or so this relationship has gotten actually worse and worse, not better and better."

Webb supports traditional Democratic issues like economic fairness and criminal justice reform, as well as less traditional ones like gun rights and a stronger Congressional role in national security policy.

Meanwhile, former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley has also been hanging around. While O'Malley is currently spending a lot of time in Iowa, he's met with key Democrats in South Carolina, and in 2014 he appeared here in support of Vincent Sheheen's second failed bid for the governor's seat.

For O'Malley, like Webb, a key message is that the recovery has left working Americans behind. In a February speech in Myrtle Beach to the South Carolina Democratic Party, O'Malley suggested workers can't make it in the current economy.

"Fifty years ago the nation's largest employer was GM," O'Malley told Democrats. "An average GM employee could pay for a year's tuition at a state university with two weeks' wages. Americans are worried. And for good reason — over the last 12 years, wages have been going down, not up."

Boyd Brown, a former Democratic state legislator, is one of O'Malley's supporters in the state.

"With Martin O'Malley you can start with what he did as mayor of Baltimore, making streets safer and city government more efficient, then move into his career as governor, what he's done for public education," Brown says. "I'm somebody who's always backed a candidate who's a doer and not just a talker."

Vice President Joe Biden, who's also considered a run, made two trips to Columbia in the past year — though both were on White House business. And U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, an independent who caucuses with Democrats, spoke with progressives in Columbia last fall.

And then there's former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, who hasn't yet returned to the state that truly sank her presidential hopes in 2008. After Barack Obama's star began to rise in Iowa and Bill Clinton stuck his foot in his mouth with racially charged comments, Democrats here began jumping ship.

Last week, the *Washington Post* reported that Clinton has hired Clay Middleton, a former aide to Rep. Jim Clyburn, as her South Carolina state director.

Clinton dominates polling, with a recent Public Policy Polling survey finding her at 59 percent to 18 percent for Biden, 10 percent for Elizabeth Warren, 3 percent for O'Malley, and 1 percent each for Sanders and Webb.

And Clinton is already taking hits from the likes of former South Carolina Democratic Party chair Dick Harpootlian, a Biden supporter who told the *Washington Post* a recent scandal over Clinton's use of personal email to conduct state business will sink her.

"There's always another shoe to drop with Hillary," Harpootlian said. "Do we nominate her not knowing what's in those emails?"

Brown, too, is quite willing to tee off on Clinton.

"We haven't seen Hillary Clinton since 2008. I don't think that speaks very highly of someone that she's only here when she needs you," he says, adding that Clinton "has peaked in her popularity."

"She's staffing up, and friends of mine





Free Times
Columbia, SC
Circ. 36854
From Page:
4
3/25/2015
61438



will work for her," he adds. "I would caution them to remember what happened in 2008. At this point in 2007 we were ready to crown her then. And a Democrat with a long record in his own state came along with a fresh way to govern. I would just be a little wary of buying into the hoopla that is the campaign at this point."

Harrison, the state party chair, says these debates are a positive thing, and asks the media not to treat Clinton as inevitable.

"We're going to have some important dialogues," Harrison says. "We have a secretary of state who's thinking about getting in,

you've got a sitting senator, you've got a former governor. These are serious people, and in any other conversation their candidacy and what they have to talk about would be taken seriously. And so I think it's important to allow those to play out, to allow the debate to happen, to allow the voters to kick the tires and meet the candidates, and then we'll see how things end in February."

"One of the things I don't want to see is we have media do their projections on the presidential primary before the first vote is even taken," Harrison adds.



Then-Sen. Jim Webb and President Barack Obama appear at a campaign event in 2008. Photo by Joe Raedle



Free Times
Columbia, SC
Circ. 36854
From Page:
2
3/25/2015
61438



Two South Carolinians on ISIS Hit List 148

Two people from South Carolina are listed on a supposed ISIS "hit list," according to WIS. A group called the Islamic State Hacking Division released the names and addresses of 100 U.S. military members, two of whom are from the Palmetto State. The list reportedly calls for ISIS sympathizers to kill the 100 targeted military members. Gov. Nikki Haley's office has been made aware of the situation and has been in contact with federal authorities. The WIS report did not reveal the names of the two South Carolina members on the ISIS list. — *Chris Trainor*