

Title: **Millions in tax credits available in S.C. school-choice program**
 Author: BY JAMIESELF jself@thestate.com
 Size: 49.44 column inches
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



EDUCATION

Millions in tax credits available in S.C. school-choice program

■ Taxpayers can claim about \$7.4 million in tax credits if they donate to to help kids with disabilities pay for private school or pay that tuition themselves out of pocket.

BY JAMIE SELF

jself@thestate.com

COLUMBIA

More than \$7 million in S.C. tax credits are up for grabs in the state's private-school choice program.

Taxpayers are eligible for the credits if they donate to a state program to help children with disabilities pay private-school tuition or if they pay that tuition out of their own pocket.

As of Thursday, a new nonprofit, formed by the state, had received \$3.8 million in donations for the school-choice grants. Taxpayers who donate to the nonprofit can claim a tax credit reducing their state taxes owed by up to 60 percent. The state offers up to \$10 million in credits for donations to the program.

The state also is offering \$2 million in credits to taxpayers who pay private-school tuition out of pocket for children with disabilities. As of Thursday, taxpayers had claimed about \$790,000 in those credits.

The tax credit and

school-choice grants program – launched in 2014 – have proven popular with the demand for the tax credits exceeding the amount authorized by the state.

But this year, state lawmakers took direct control of the program after hearing concerns about how it was being operated. Until July 1 of this year, the state allowed nonprofit scholarship groups to raise money that was eligible for the tax credits and issue private-school tuition grants to children with disabilities.

State lawmakers “hit reset on this program for a number of reasons and because there were a number of concerns with the way the scholarship organizations operated,” state Revenue Department Director Rick Reames said. “In order to have a program that is sustainable and long term, you’ve got to run it correctly.”

The changes that took effect earlier this month banned the nonprofit

scholarship groups from raising money and issuing grants for the program. The scholarship groups must cease operation and donate all their remaining money to the state’s new program by Aug. 1.

The new state law calls for the creation of a new nonprofit – Exceptional SC – to raise money and issue private school tuition grants for the scholarship program. The organization has applied for charity status and has a five-member board.

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The state’s tax agency recently found that arrangement to be in violation of state law, though the nonprofit’s leaders disagreed.

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Private school-choice tax credits

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- S.C. taxpayers who donate to Exceptional SC – a nonprofit set up by the state to raise money and issue private-school tuition grants to students with disabilities – are eligible for a tax credit. The credit is worth the value of the donation and can cut the donor’s state taxes by up to 60 percent of the amount owed.
- The S.C. Department of Revenue is offering up to \$10 million a year in tax credits, available on a first-come, first-served basis. Taxpayers who claim the S.C. credit also are eligible for a charitable tax deduction on their federal tax returns. After the state has reached its \$10 million cap on tax credits for donations to the tuition-grants program, donations are eligible for the state and federal charitable tax deduction instead.
- The state tax agency also is offering up to \$2 million in tax credits for tuition paid to private schools for children with special needs. A taxpayer can claim the credit for up to \$11,000 in tuition paid per child.
- The Revenue Department updates how many credits are available daily on its website.

Title: **School tax credits top \$7M**
 Author: JAMIE SELF THE STATE
 Size: 36.27 column inches
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



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Available in SC choice program

JAMIE SELF
 THE STATE

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See SCHOOL, Page 4A

School

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Title: **Chief: DOT probe ongoing**
Author: TIM SMITH TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
Size: 64.79 column inches
Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Chief: DOT probe ongoing

But chairman says he
welcomes investigation

TIM SMITH

TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM

COLUMBIA - The chairman of the state Department of Transportation confirmed Friday that a corruption investigation of the agency is ongoing but said he welcomes it.

State Attorney General Alan Wilson announced Thursday that three former DOT officials were indicted by a state grand jury on corruptions charges but his office and a spokesman for the State Law Enforcement Division declined to say if the probe was ongoing.

DOT Chairman Mike Wooten told *The Greenville News* Friday that it is and that DOT officials were the ones who brought law enforcement in to investigate the matter. He said he welcomed the investigation.

"I think that any criminal needs to be caught and prosecuted, period," Wooten said. "I welcome the investigation and think it's a good thing. An organization the size of this, you're going to get a few bad apples. The quicker you find them and sort them out, the better for the whole organization."

See DOT, Page 4A

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DOT

Continued from Page 1A

The three former DOT officials are accused in the indictments of accepting bribes, kickbacks or benefiting unlawfully from their positions. One former official allegedly was paid \$360,000 over the years by a company he had a secret ownership interest in and which did business with the DOT division the official headed.

The five indictments carry years of possible prison time if the officials are convicted. The indictments were unsealed this week but handed down last month.

Wooten said he does not believe a culture of corruption exists in the agency.

"I do believe that some people are just prone to do bad things," he said. "The beauty of catching them and prosecuting them is it sets an example. It shows folks you can't get away with that stuff. What breeds a culture of that is people continually getting away with it. There is where the danger is."

Wooten said he is surprised it took so long for the former DOT officials to be indicted because he said the investigation was going on for a while. He said his reaction when told Thursday of the indictments being announced was "finally."

According to the indictments, the acts at issue stretched back to 2009.

Wooten said the agency initiated the request with law enforcement to investigate the matter.

He said he believes the probe started while current Secretary Christy

Hall was a deputy. Hall was made deputy secretary in 2011 and named by Gov. Nikki Haley as transportation secretary in November of last year.

"SCDOT has zero tolerance for wrongdoing of any kind and wishes to express its appreciation for the hard work of both the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) and the SC Attorney General's Office," Hall said in a statement Thursday.

Wooten said the agency has been the target of critics for years and the indictments and probe could give them ammunition.

"I believe that DOT has been the favorite can to be kicked by the blogs and the naysayers for the past three or four years," he said. "And this just adds ammunition to those who are convinced that the agency is corrupt. But for those people who really understand how DOT does business, I think it should be the opposite, it should show that we won't tolerate this and we're going to prosecute people when they are caught doing wrong."

Those indicted include:

» Charles W. Shirley, a former field operations manager of DOT's Intelligent Transportation Systems division, charged with one count criminal conspiracy, one count official misconduct in office, three counts of receiving anything of value to influence the action of a public employee and one count of acceptance of rebates or extra compensation.

Shirley, who supervised DOT's signal shop

that covered five Midlands counties, maintained a secret ownership in a company doing contract work with his division, according to the indictment. Shirley reviewed the invoices and improperly received \$360,000 over the years through the arrangement.

» Allen Kent Ray, a neighbor of Shirley's who according to the indictment formed a company with Shirley, charged with one count criminal conspiracy and one count of offering anything of value to influence the actions of a public employee.

The indictment alleges that Ray conspired with Shirley to create the company in 2009 in an arrangement in which Shirley's division awarded the company work and Ray paid Shirley a total of \$360,000 between 2009 and 2015.

» Curtis C. Singleton, a former head of DOT's signal shop headquartered in Columbia, charged with one count of using his official position or office for financial gain, one count of receiving anything of value to influence the actions of a public employee, one count of misconduct in office and one count of acceptance of rebates or extra compensation.

The indictments allege that Singleton asked a contractor in 2011 if he wanted a job to build an intersection in Lexington County.

"Singleton told the contractor words to the effect 'if you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours,'" the indictment alleges. The con-

tractor then paid Singleton \$1,200, the indictment alleges.

On another occasion, an indictment alleges, Singleton "demanded" that a contractor to sell him a truck, which the contractor did at about \$10,000 less than market value, according to the indictment. The indictment alleges the contractor did this to continue receiving work from Singleton.

The indictment also alleges that Singleton told a contractor in 2012 to markup the price of some supplies for DOT, which he did by \$3,400. Singleton then demanded \$2,500 of that amount from the contractor, which he paid, the indictment alleges.

» Joe Edward Butler, a former DOT inspector, charged with four counts of receiving anything of value to influence the action of a public employee, three counts of breach of trust with fraudulent intent and one count of acceptance of rebates or extra compensation.

The indictment alleges that Butler made an arrangement with a contractor in which he stole supplies and equipment from DOT and sold it to the contractor. The payments between 2013 and 2014 totaled \$14,500 and included a new traffic signal controller for \$4,000, according to the indictment.

According to DOT, Shirley left the agency in January, while Singleton left in August of 2015 and Butler left in November 2014.

None of those charged could be reached for comment.

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State lawmakers “hit reset on this program for a number of reasons and because there were a number of concerns with the way the scholarship organizations operated,” state Revenue Department Director Rick Reames said. “In order to have a program that is sustainable and long term, you’ve got to run it correctly.”

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BY JAMIE SELF

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SEE SCHOOLS, 6A

SCHOOLS

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Title: **Potential gubernatorial candidate warns of pro-unions sentiment**
 Author: BYRUDOLPH BELL The Greenville News
 Size: 23.56 column inches
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Potential gubernatorial candidate warns of pro-union sentiment

BY RUDOLPH BELL
The Greenville News

GREENVILLE

A potential Republican candidate for S.C. governor warned members of the Greenville Chamber on Wednesday that pro-union sentiment might be growing in South Carolina.

Catherine Templeton, a Charleston resident who ran the state Department of Health and Environmental Control under GOP Gov. Nikki Haley, spoke to the chamber's Legislative Committee and Manufacturing Roundtable.

She cited the results of a 2015 survey taken by the Palmetto Shield, an alliance of business groups,

that she said showed majority support for organized labor among people who had lived in South Carolina for five years or less.

"It's a shocking result, especially for those of us who were pretty sure we were anti-union," Templeton said.

She said South Carolina has been growing fast and has a "new demographic that we need to be aware of."

"And it's only going to continue to become more of a majority."

Echoing the anti-union rhetoric of Haley, Templeton accused organized labor of using "dishonorable" tactics in trying to penetrate the "greenfield"

state of South Carolina, which historically has had one of the lowest unionization rates in the country.

She also urged employers to make sure they're communicating with employees and treating them with respect.

Templeton later told The Greenville News that residents who had lived in South Carolina five years or less accounted for 9 percent of those who responded to the survey.

She said that she was not at liberty to disclose all of the survey results.

Templeton is a Wofford College graduate who worked for Milliken & Co.



Templeton

in Spartanburg before joining Ogletree Deakins, a labor law firm with Greenville origins.

While at Ogletree Deakins, she helped represent management when the United Auto Workers tried unsuccessfully to organize the Nissan factory in Smyrna, Tennessee.

At least four Ogletree Deakins lawyers were among those who heard Templeton speak Wednesday.

Templeton is currently president of Brawley Templeton LLC, a consultancy in Charleston.

Before taking the podium, Templeton confirmed that she is thinking about running for governor as a Republican.

Title: **SC's red-state status challenges liberals**

Author: BY BRIANNA SPAUSE Special to The Island Packet and The BeaufortGazette

Size: 62.62 column inches

Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



CASE OF THE BLUES

SC's red-state status challenges liberals

■ Those who stand in the minority say an influx of young people could energize the Democratic Party.

BY BRIANNA SPAUSE
*Special to The Island Packet
 and The Beaufort Gazette*

When the lights turn low, a star-studded lineup of speakers inspires passion and over 50,000 Democrats join forces to unite their party, there's no place Melissa Watson would rather be.

"It's intimate," the South Carolina delegate said about the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia this week. "When you're in a red state, you need this."

Watson, an Army Reserve veteran and 2nd vice chair of the S.C. Democratic Party, said she and her fellow South Carolinians are heading home from the convention to face a familiar challenge — being blue in a red state.

Watson said she has always stood on the minority side — as a woman, an African-American and a Democrat in the state of South Carolina, which has been under Republican-majority control since 2003.

"It's always hard to stand out and say that I have a different set of values," Watson said. "But

you have to do what you have to do because it feels right, and at the end of the day, it comes out in the wash."

Among South Carolina's seven congressional districts and two Senate seats in the federal government, the sole Democrat is Rep. Jim Clyburn. On the state level, Republicans also have majority control at the Statehouse in Columbia.

With a minority rule, State Party Chair Jamie Harrison said it is difficult to pass legislation he says is crucial to the well-being of the state.

"Enough is enough," Harrison said, as rallied the state's delegates at Wednesday's breakfast toward his goal of turning the state blue.

"You have to start from somewhere; that's the way I look at it," Harrison said. "We're just tired of being tired. Our roads are falling apart. Our schools are crumbling. There's thousands of people who don't have health care. Hospitals are being closed in areas that have had hospi-

tals for generations."

The party has had a little success negotiating budget impasses, like the roads bill from the past legislative session that is awaiting Republican Gov. Nikki Haley's signature.

The \$4 million bill allocates funds to replace 400 bridges, repair the Midland's "Malfunction Junction" and give Haley more control of the Transportation Department. The budget accounts for 10 percent of the funds needed to repair the state's public roads.

"We're tired of this," Harrison said. "These are basic necessities that the people of South Carolina are not enjoying at this time. All of those things could be solved if we had visionary leadership to do it."

For delegate Brady Quirk-Gavin, being blue in a red state presents an opportunity. Even if the Democrats in South Carolina do not hold the majority, Quirk-Gavin said they have a large responsibility in the political sphere.

"When you have a state like South Carolina that's so dominated by Republicans, the rhetoric gets blown out of proportion," Quirk-Gavin said. "At the end of the day, if all people hear are right-wing talking points, they believe that's fact. One of the things that we as Democrats must do is push back on that and say what's over the line or incorrect."

Watson said the solution to the partisan battle that dominates the Palmetto State lies in its youth. As a secondary school teacher, she sees the potential of the state's young people to energize the Democratic Party into an effective force.

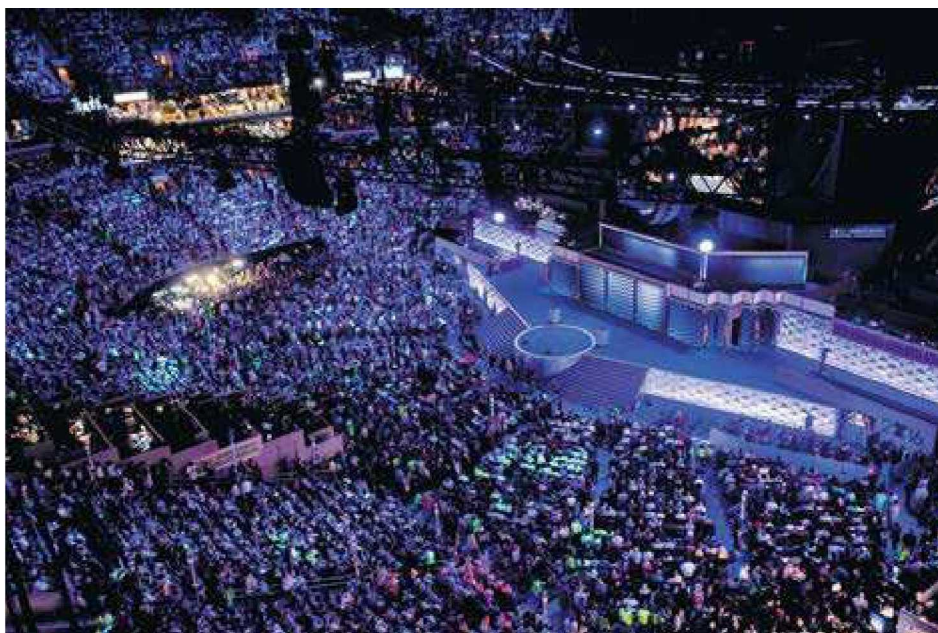
"Bringing in young people fosters energy, and they can get things done that maybe an experienced politician can't," Watson said. "Young people need to understand that they're going to inherit this mess or, on the flip side, they can inherit a good thing. They have to have a seat at the table now."

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What's a red state?

Mainstream media shorthand defines partisan politics in its states one of two ways — red or blue.

A red state, like South Carolina, is controlled by a Republican majority. In a blue state, on the other hand — like California — Democrats hold the majority.



BRIANNA SPAUSE Special to The Island Packet and The Beaufort Gazette

Democrats are bathed in blue light while awaiting speakers on the final night of the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

Title: **Mercedes-Benz breaks ground on plant**
 Author: BRUCE SMITH ASSOCIATED PRESS
 Size: 35.65 column inches
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Mercedes-Benz breaks ground on plant

BRUCE SMITH

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. - Prompted by growing North American demand for its vans, Mercedes-Benz Vans broke ground Wednesday on a new \$500 million U.S. assembly plant in South Carolina.

The site is next to an existing plant where, for the past decade, the company has put Sprinter vans made in Germany back together after being disassembled and shipped to this country because of the high duties on importing finished vehicles.

"The logistics process is a nightmare," Volker Mornhinweg, the head of Mercedes-Benz Vans, told reporters.

In the existing factory the parts and bodies of the vans, shipped through the Port of Charleston, are reassembled in a process that takes four to five hours.

During the past decade, Mercedes-Benz Vans

has been gauging the North American market for its vans. Last year the company delivered 28,600 vans to customers in the United States, an increase of 11 percent over 2014.

After Germany, the United States is the largest market for the vans.

"Now the time is mature that we can build a full-fledged facility here for the North American market," Mornhinweg said.

The new plant will add more than 1 million square feet to the existing 400,000 square-foot facility. It is expected to employ 1,300 workers and the company says it should mean 400 additional jobs for parts suppliers in the area.

Mornhinweg said that in addition to growing demand, the company selected North Charleston because it already has 200 trained workers and owned property to expand at the site.

He said for competitive

reasons, the company was not announcing exactly when the plant will open or how many vans it will produce each year.

Gov. Nikki Haley, who appeared with U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham and other state and local

officials are the event, thanked the company.

"We will keep you ahead of schedule," she said. "There is nothing you will ever want or need that the people in the state of South Carolina won't deliver because you have made a sacrifice. Because of your \$500 million investment, 1,300 families will now be able to thank you."

Volvo Cars is building a plant just up Interstate 26 from the Mercedes plant and expects to employ 2,000 workers there during the next decade. BMW already employs about 8,000 workers at its assembly plant in upstate South Carolina



BRUCE SMITH/AP

Mercedes-Benz says its first vans will roll off the assembly line in North Charleston, S.C., by the end of the decade.

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With a minority rule, State Party Chair Jamie Harrison said it is difficult to pass legislation he says is crucial to the well-being of the state.

"Enough is enough," Harrison said, as rallied the state's delegates at Wednesday's breakfast toward his goal of turning the state blue.

"You have to start from somewhere; that's the way I look at it," Harrison said. "We're just tired of being tired. Our roads are falling apart. Our schools are crumbling. There's thousands of people who don't have health care. Hospitals are being closed in areas that have had hospi-

tals for generations."

The party has had a little success negotiating budget impasses, like the roads bill from the past legislative session that is awaiting Republican Gov. Nikki Haley's signature.

The \$4 million bill allocates funds to replace 400 bridges, repair the Midland's "Malfunction Junction" and give Haley more control of the Transportation Department. The budget accounts for 10 percent of the funds needed to repair the state's public roads.

"We're tired of this," Harrison said. "These are basic necessities that the people of South Carolina are not enjoying at this time. All of those things could be solved if we had visionary leadership to do it."

For delegate Brady Quirk-Gavin, being blue in a red state presents an opportunity. Even if the Democrats in South Carolina do not hold the majority, Quirk-Gavin said they have a large responsibility in the political sphere.

"When you have a state like South Carolina that's so dominated by Republicans, the rhetoric gets blown out of proportion," Quirk-Gavin said. "At the end of the day, if all people hear are right-wing talking points, they believe that's fact. One of the things that we as Democrats must do is push back on that and say what's over the line or incorrect."

Watson said the solution to the partisan battle that dominates the Palmetto State lies in its youth. As a secondary school teacher, she sees the potential of the state's young people to energize the Democratic Party into an effective force.

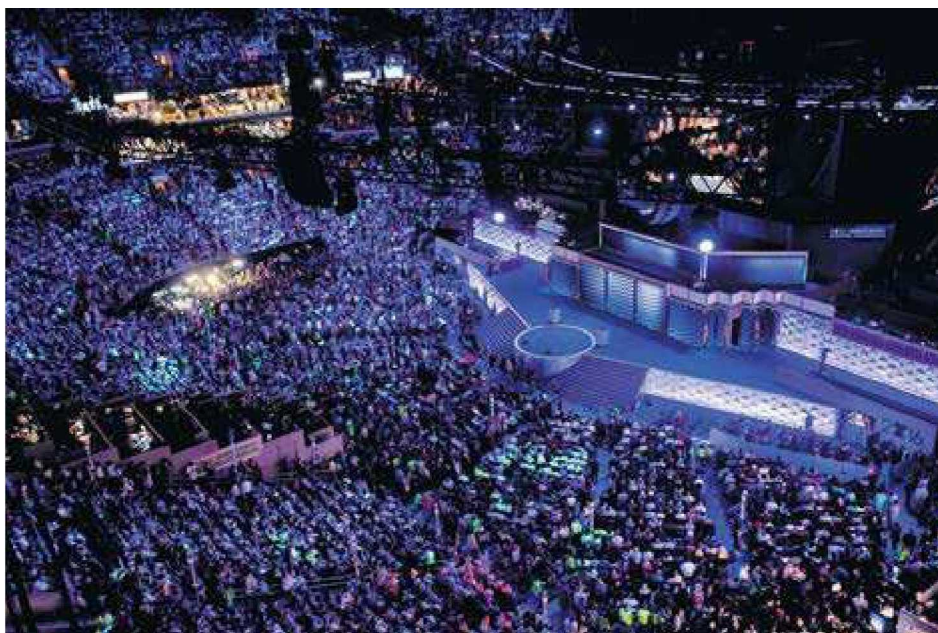
"Bringing in young people fosters energy, and they can get things done that maybe an experienced politician can't," Watson said. "Young people need to understand that they're going to inherit this mess or, on the flip side, they can inherit a good thing. They have to have a seat at the table now."

Title: **SC's red-state status challenges liberals**
Author: BY BRIANNA SPAUSE Special to The Island Packet and The Beaufort Gazette
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What's a red state?

Mainstream media shorthand defines partisan politics in its states one of two ways — red or blue.

A red state, like South Carolina, is controlled by a Republican majority. In a blue state, on the other hand — like California — Democrats hold the majority.



BRIANNA SPAUSE Special to The Island Packet and The Beaufort Gazette

Democrats are bathed in blue light while awaiting speakers on the final night of the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

Title: **Aiken's Camden Riviere honored**
 Author: BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND ccleveland@aikenstandard.com
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Aiken's Camden Riviere honored

BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND

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Camden Riviere, 2016 Real Tennis World Champion, received a warm tribute in Aiken Thursday for his recent accomplishments.

So much so, he admitted it didn't hit him until he came back home, where he was introduced to the sport.

"I've been asked a lot lately how it feels to accomplish this goal and I've been struggling to come up with an answer; a lot of it was because it hadn't quite hit me yet," he said after thanking the room of guests at Aiken Municipal Conference Center.

"I realized it wasn't going to be until I got down here and celebrated this moment with y'all that it was going to be complete ... It wasn't until this moment that it's really felt complete, until

it's really felt like I had become the actual champion."

The left-handed player Riviere is the first American in 42 years to win Singles World Championship of Court Tennis and currently holds titles in Singles and Doubles World Championships and Singles and Doubles U.S. and British Open Championships.

Court tennis is played in four countries – the United States, France, Australia and England, said Jeremy Wintersteen, president of the U.S. Court Tennis Association.

In May, Riviere beat Australian Rob Fahey, who held the title since 1994.

"There's a lot of strategy, there's just a lot of things to master before you be-

come really good at court tennis and Camden has finally put it all together, and he's just an incredible package in terms of being an athlete in the game of court tennis," Wintersteen said.

"He's probably the quickest player in court tennis. He's got incredible eye and incredible foot work."

Riviere, born in Charleston, was raised in Aiken and attended Aiken Preparatory and Aiken High School and played tennis at both schools. He is also a member at the Aiken Tennis Club, which brings players to the City for tournaments.

When attending Aiken Prep, he said he was able to walk to the club every day and play and said Aiken High

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was able to accommodate him while he traveled on the amateur circuit throughout high school.

Riviere told the *Aiken Standard* his connection to Aiken is something that made Thursday meaningful. The dozens in attendance – including City and County leaders, former school teachers, family and coaches – were on their feet after watching a short video of him playing and winning in the sport.

"Most of the people in the room here, helped me along in some way. It didn't really hit me until I got down here how important it was to me that I

am from Aiken and that everybody was here today," Riviere said. "I'm kind of up North and travel a lot and do a lot of things, but this is my home. I always plan on coming back to South Carolina, no matter where I go."

In honor of Riviere, Mayor Rick Osborn proclaimed August racquet sports month city wide. Osborn said the City has incredible athletes and "incredible people representing us."

"We've long had a rich tradition in court tennis. I just have to tell you, Camden, as one of our own, this is a huge honor not just for you but the City shares this with you," he said.

Representing Aiken County,

Council member Andrew Siders said there are a lot of things that make America great – including leaders and sports legends.

"And (Riviere), you're right up there with them," Siders said.

During Thursday's event, coach Dacre Stoker presented Riviere a proclamation on behalf of Gov. Nikki Haley and Stephanie Biddle Pendarvis, representing U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson's office, presented the athlete an American flag flown over the U.S. Capitol.

Sen. Tom Young and Rep. Bill Taylor, of the Aiken County Legislative Delegation, also presented him recognitions on behalf of the S.C. Senate and

House.

Riviere told the newspaper his current goal is continue to be World Champion. The next challenge is in two years and he will start preparing in around six months.

Until then, he's back on the pro tour. July and August are his only months off from tournaments before a full schedule that goes through September to June.

"(I'm) just going straight back into it, trying to keep winning and keep representing the game," he said.

Christina Cleveland is the county government reporter at the *Aiken Standard*.

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STAFF PHOTO BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND

Camden Riviere, Aikenite and World Champion of Court Tennis, smiles while signing autographs after being honored by the city of Aiken Thursday.



STAFF PHOTO BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND

Sen. Tom Young and Rep. Bill Taylor, of the Aiken County Legislative Delegation, present Camden Riviere plaques from the S.C. Statehouse.