

Title: **Finally, a glimpse of sanity on beachfront**
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EDITORIALS

Finally, a glimpse of sanity on beachfront

The Editorial Board

A good, strong dose of sanity was delivered last week by the General Assembly on the tricky issue of ocean-front development.

The new law passed at long last and sent to the governor will draw a line in the sand.

It will stop development from inching ever closer to the ravaging sea.

South Carolina tried to get a handle on this problem with the 1988 Beachfront Management Act. It drew a line in the sand based on years of erosion data. It prohibited construction seaward of that line.

It was a progressive law, based on the science and common sense of a very simple principle: retreat from the encroaching ocean.

But loopholes were used to circumvent that sound principle.

We trust the new law closes the loopholes.

Under the Shoreline Management Bill (S. 319), that line in the sand will never move seaward after Dec. 31, 2017.

Developers, property owners and even some local governments got around the restriction by arguing that the baseline should move seaward if sand built up on the beach after taxpayers spent tens of millions of dollars in beach nourishment projects. But moving the baseline seaward is pure foolishness because that sand buildup is usually only temporary. You can fool state law, and you can fool a court of law, but you cannot fool Mother Nature.

State Rep. Bill Herbkersman of Bluffton sponsored the House version of the bill.

He says it grew out recommendations of the 2011

Blue Ribbon Committee on Shoreline Management that he served on and Wes Jones of Bluffton chaired. To show how long this bit of common sense took to enact, the original legislation said the baseline would never move seaward from the position it occupied in June 2011.

As Herbkersman explained: "If we move the baseline seaward to account for a temporary event, when that event reverses, any buildings that were built during the previous years are in jeopardy. Property owners then want permission to build protective structures, even though we know that these structures increase erosion on neighboring properties."

Also, it is always the general public (taxpayers) who get stuck with the bill when foolish construction demands more beach restoration, and when losses skewer the flood insurance and wind and hail insurance rates for everyone.

State Rep. Weston Newton of Bluffton and state Sen. Chip Campsen of Charleston, whose district includes parts of Beaufort County, are also credited with helping get this bill passed.

It's overdue.

A statement from the Coastal Conservation League based in Charleston, which has pushed for these reforms for more than a decade, tells why it matters to the general public.

"When Gov. (Nikki) Haley signs S. 139, South Carolina's shoreline will have a baseline that never moves seaward — a delineation that establishes a seaside boundary for construction — protecting our beaches and the communities that depend on them."

Title: **Law on concealed guns among those signed by Haley**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
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Law on concealed guns among those signed by Haley

BY SEANNA ADCOX

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — New laws signed by Gov. Nikki Haley shorten the legislative session, allow South Carolinians to carry concealed guns in Georgia, and block petroleum companies from taking people's land for a pipeline.

Those are among more than 40 bills Haley quickly signed Friday, a day after legislators sent them her way. Dozens more could become law within the week, as the Legislature passed a slew of bills in the session's final days.

While the session officially ended Thursday, legislators will return June 15 to take up Haley's vetoes.

Here's a look at some of the laws that took effect Friday:

- Future legislative sessions will end three weeks earlier, on the second Thursday in May, unless a bad economy causes the state's revenue forecasters to reduce their estimates. South Carolina's regular legislative session is the 13th longest among states. The House, which wanted to cut even more weeks, has been trying to shorten the January-to-June session for 20 years, but prior proposals kept dying in the Senate. Proponents said shortening the session saves taxpayers money in legisla-

tors' per diems for food and lodging, plus mileage, and could encourage more people to seek the job.

- A reciprocity agreement with Georgia will make it easier for South Carolinians with concealed weapon permits to travel back and forth. The law was sought mainly by residents in Aiken County, who drive daily into Augusta. Advocates argued not having reciprocity with the state's western neighbor is a real inconvenience. The law creates an exception to prior law barring state law enforcement from recognizing permits from states that don't have at least the same requirements to carry a concealed gun as South Carolina. Georgia doesn't require training for its permit.

ing permits from states that don't have at least the same requirements to carry a concealed gun as South Carolina. Georgia doesn't require training for its permit.

- Private, for-profit companies can't acquire land for a petroleum pipeline through eminent domain. The law specifies only public utilities have the right to take property for public use, after giving the owners money. It was driven by residents' fears of losing their land to an underground pipeline planned to run from Belton to Jacksonville, Florida. The Palmetto Pipeline was canceled earlier this year after Georgia

passed a temporary moratorium on pipeline companies using eminent domain.

- Former students who didn't graduate solely because they didn't pass the high school exit exam can still petition their school board to retroactively receive a diploma. The law erases the previous deadline of Dec. 31, 2015. As of Dec. 1, 6,000 people had received such diplomas. The last exit exam was taken in 2014. Earlier that year, legislators abolished the test and replaced it with two considered more useful to students' future success, with scores that can go on work resumes or college admissions applications.

- Terminally ill patients gain access to medicines being tested in clinical trials. The so-called "Right to Try Act" allows a doctor to prescribe medication that's in the first phase of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval process. Similar laws have been passed in at least 28 other states. Access is limited to people with a terminal illness who have exhausted all options approved by the FDA and can't enroll in a trial. Available medicines must have passed basic safety testing.

Title: **Vets' tax cut passes; ethics bills in peril**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
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SC LEGISLATURE

Vets' tax cut passes; ethics bills in peril

BY SEANNA ADCOX

Associated Press
 COLUMBIA

Bills that give military retirees a tax cut, shorten South Carolina's legislative session by three weeks and ban ticket quotas in law enforcement are among the potential laws heading to Gov. Nikki Haley's desk.

The Legislature passed a flurry of bills Thursday in the legislative session's last hours. But ethics reform bills that legislators have called a priority for four years could be dead again.

There's still a chance they could reach consensus on measures that send complaints against legislators to independent investigators and require all officeholders to disclose who pays them.

Because they made it to panels that try to compromise on the chambers' differing versions of bills, they stay alive for the special session later this month. But legislators may take up little beyond Haley's vetoes then.

MILITARY TAX CUT

Legislation touted as enticing working-age veterans who served 20 years in uniform to retire in South Carolina passed with minutes to spare.

The tax benefits would phase in over five years.

By 2020, military retirees younger than 65 could deduct \$17,500 of their income earned in the state. Retirees 65 or older could exempt up to \$30,000. Once fully phased in, the cuts are expected to reduce state revenues by \$18 million.

The House's initial version allowed for bigger benefits sooner, reducing revenues by an estimated \$31 million once fully implemented in three years. But with the 5 p.m. deadline looming, Rep. Murrell Smith, R-Sumter, encouraged his colleagues to accept the Senate's changes.

"At this late hour, this is the best we can do," he said. "We want people to retire and relocate here. They're at an age they can contribute to the economy."

Sen. Gerald Malloy had blocked the bill's passage, saying military retirees already have many benefits the state's poor do not. He argued it would be better to expand Medicaid eligibility.

He said he's concerned legislators "continue to pass bills that will end up benefiting some and not others."

But he allowed a vote after senators agreed to the five-year phase-in.

ETHICS REFORM

The House and Senate are still far apart on a bill requiring complaints against legislators to be independently investigated.

Currently, House and Senate ethics committees oversee the campaign filings and handle complaints against their colleagues, while the State Ethics Commission oversees all other public officials. Critics, including Haley, equate the arrangement to "the fox guarding the henhouse."

The legislation would revamp the State Ethics Commission and expand its duties to legislators. However, House and Senate ethics panels would still get the final say over their members. The versions differ in who decides whether a legislator likely violated the law and when allegations become public.

Under the House's latest version, the revamped commission would make that determination. A probable cause finding would trigger documents becoming publicly available. The appropriate legislative panel would then hold a public hearing.

The Senate wants the commission to issue recommendations to the legislative panels.

House Speaker Pro Tem Tommy Pope, the bill's sponsor, said that won't boost confidence in the system.

"Their version will keep the same cloud over us," an obviously frustrated Pope told his colleagues from the podium. "I don't know where we can go, folks. We have given and given and given, but maybe they really want it to die."

Senate Judiciary Chairman Larry Martin said he's still optimistic a compromise can pass when the Legislature returns June 15. The hang-up is that some senators believe the commission would vote for probable cause just to embarrass legislators. Martin said he doubts that.

"But, unfortunately, some of the members in there have a very strong opinion about it," he said.

Another ethics bill on life support would require all elected and public officials to report the sources of their private income — but not how much they are paid. Currently, officeholders must report only public income sources, such as legislative pay, on their annual "statement of economic interest."

Title: **Law would put brakes on developers' march to ocean**
 Author: BY SAMMY FRETWELL sfretwell@thestate.com
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LEGISLATURE

Law would put brakes on developers' march to ocean

BY SAMMY FRETWELL

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COLUMBIA

After years of debate, South Carolina took steps Wednesday to stop developers from building high-rise hotels, condominium buildings and other major projects close to the ocean after taxpayers spend money to renourish public beaches.

The S.C. House passed a bill that will close a loophole in state law that has allowed new construction closer to the ocean when renourishment projects temporarily widen the seashore.

FROM PAGE 3A

OCEAN

contained a loophole that allowed new seaside development even closer to the ocean after renourishment projects temporarily widened beaches. That occurred in parts of Hilton Head Island and at Cherry Grove, a section of North Myrtle Beach with a history of flooding. Taxpayers, at one point, had spent \$60 million widening beaches before regulators allowed new development to move toward the sea.

Critics have said it's a

While the legislation gives a short-term reprieve to developers at Kiawah Island and other places, the lower chamber's action is considered a significant, long-term step to prevent construction farther out on the beach at a time of rising sea levels.

The Senate already has passed the bill, meaning the measure now goes to Gov. Nikki Haley for final approval following a routine final vote in the House. The new restrictions are to take effect in 2018. The House vote was

unanimous Wednesday.

Tightening the law "means our beachfront is protected from ill-advised development," said Katie Zimmerman, an official with the S.C. Coastal Conservation League in Charleston. "We have communities now trying to retroactively solve problems that resulted from building too close to the ocean. Now, we have a strong policy in place that will prevent further (construction) from going forward in areas where it should not."

South Carolina has

struggled for decades with how to control oceanfront development in a state that attracts millions of visitors to its beaches every year. A 1988 state law was intended to gradually push development back from the oceanfront because of concerns about property damage and the loss of public beach when people build too close to the sea.

The law never accomplished that goal because of legal challenges and exemptions. But it also

SEE OCEAN, 4A

bad policy because the extra sand will eventually wash away, exposing more development to hurricanes and rising sea levels.

Sea levels are expected to rise anywhere from 1 to 5 feet along the South Atlantic coast by the end of the 21st century, threatening oceanfront beach cottages, hotels and other structures, according to a 2013 climate assessment by more than 100 scientists and researchers. The state has experienced a 1-foot rise in sea level in

the past century.

State law has allowed the Department of Health and Environmental Control to move a line that restricts development toward the ocean when beaches build up — whether naturally or artificially through renourishment projects. The agency resets the line every eight to 10 years and can also move it landward when beaches erode. The new law freezes the line from being moved seaward after Dec. 31, 2017.

Because the bill ap-

proved by the House

doesn't take effect until the end of 2017, developers along the coast have a chance to ask DHEC once more to move development lines seaward. The agency would make a determination based in part on historic erosion rates, but those decisions can be challenged. In an email to The State newspaper, the department said it expects to begin a review of whether to move the lines this year.

Title: **Haley talks Trump, Confederate flag ahead of anniversary**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
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Haley talks Trump, Confederate flag ahead of anniversary

BY SEANNA ADCOX

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley said Thursday she wishes Donald Trump communicated differently because bad things result from divisive rhetoric, as evidenced by last June's massacre in Charleston.

The Republican governor said divisive speech motivated Dylann Roof to gun down nine black parishioners at historic Emanuel AME Church. Police have said the white 22-year-old charged with their killings wanted to start a race war.

The Confederate flag that Roof was seen brandishing in photos had to be removed from the Statehouse grounds, she said, and she supports sending the rebel flag in The Citadel's chapel to a museum too. But she opposes renaming buildings or monuments associated with the state's racist past.

Haley, who endorsed then-candidate Marco Rubio ahead of South Carolina's primary, said she has vocally criticized Trump because "I know what that rhetoric can do. I saw it happen."

She said she doesn't think people who support Trump are racist or haters.

"That's a different kind of anger. They're upset with Washington, D.C. They're

upset nothing's got done," she said. "The way he communicates that, I wish were different."

Trump has a responsibility for the country's well-being to use a civil, respectful tone, she told reporters two weeks ahead of the anniversary of the Emanuel shooting.

Less than a month after the shooting, the Legislature — at Haley's urging — voted to remove the Confederate flag from the Statehouse's front lawn and send it to a museum.

The flag "hijacked by that murderer" had to go, she said, recognizing that some pro-flag people are still upset by her public prompting.

"I don't think they're bad people. I think they really were focused on heritage and sacrifice, but I think when that murderer kidnapped their flag and held it with hate and killed those people, there was just no other option," she said.

The flag flying in The Citadel's Summerall Chapel in Charleston should be sent to a museum too, she said.

"You've got the museum right next door, so just take it from the chapel and put it in a museum and move on," she said.

Officials send

military tax bill to Haley

COLUMBIA (AP) — The Legislature has approved a bill that cuts income taxes for military retirees who served 20 years in uniform.

The House's 96-0 vote Thursday sent the bill to Gov. Nikki Haley.

The benefits would be phased in over five years. By 2020, military retirees younger than 65 could deduct \$17,500 of their income. Retirees 65 or older could exempt up to \$30,000.

The House's initial version allowed a complete exemption in three years. But with minutes left in the legislative session, GOP Rep. Murrell Smith encouraged his colleagues to accept the Senate's changes.

He said it will hopefully entice more working-age military veterans to retire in South Carolina.

Democratic Sen. Gerald Malloy of Darlington had opposed the bill, arguing military retirees already have many benefits the state's poor do not.

Title: **Gun reciprocity bill heads to Haley**
 Author: BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND ccleveland@aikenstandard.com
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Gun reciprocity bill heads to Haley

Bill would let S.C., Georgia weapons permit holders carry between states

BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND

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A bill that would allow South Carolina and Georgia concealed weapons permit holders to lawfully carry between the states is now headed to Gov. Nikki Haley's desk.

The bill passed the S.C. Senate by a 35-3 vote Wednesday.

Rep. Bill Hixon, R-North Augusta, the bill's primary sponsor, said Thursday the Senate's vote was the "most wonderful thing" to have happened.

"I had tremendous help from all my House members, the Senate Democrats and Republicans, House Democrats and Republicans, the



National Wild Turkey Federation, Congressman (Jeff) Duncan," Hixon said, "Many many people wanted this done."

Hixon has long said the issue is important to Georgians and South Carolinians that live along the states' border, including his constituents in Aiken County.

Haley

Supporters of the bill have also described CWP holders mostly as law abiding and Hixon said Georgia's permit application is more in-depth than the application in the Palmetto State.

GUNS

CONTINUED from 1A

The Associated Press reports Kimpson was protesting lawmakers not taking up a measure to close a background check loophole that allowed Dylann Roof to obtain a gun police say was used in the killing of nine parishioners at a Charleston church last year.

Kimpson agreed to pull his amendments on the reciprocity bill and, in exchange for allowing a vote, the senator has been granted a hearing about the loophole, the AP's article states.

Hixon said Kimpson was upset that Senate Judiciary Chairman Larry Martin, R-Pickens, wouldn't hear any of his bills regarding the state's gun laws.

"I made a commitment to him (Kimpson) last night after the bill passed, I would help him look at our gun laws when we come back in 2017," Hixon said Thursday. "The main thing is we don't want people who aren't supposed to have guns to be able to obtain them, and we want people

Those who oppose the measure have pointed out that Georgia does not require training for permits.

Chuck Scott, owner of The Gun Rack in Aiken, said gun reciprocity with Georgia is a "hot issue" for his customers.

Scott said it's a shame Georgia cannot bring up their training standards for permits, but said since it doesn't look like that's changing any time soon, people shouldn't be denied their rights.

"Everybody that has a CWP has a background check," Scott said. "They're not issued to crimi-

nals. It's a very law-abiding section of the population and to deny them their rights is kind of stupid. Our states should be able to get along."

South Carolina has reciprocity agreements with a little more than 20 states.

In April 2015, the House passed the reciprocity bill 101-5. The legislation passed the Senate Judiciary Committee with a 21-0 vote last month and was placed on special order in the Senate.

But, in the Senate, the bill faced around 80 amendments from Sen. Marlon Kimpson, D-Charleston.

Please see **GUNS**, Page 12A

who are good, law-abiding citizens to be able to carry and practice their second amendment rights."

The bill will have to be approved by the governor before becoming law.

Georgia's law will not change as the state recognizes permits for residents of any state that also recognizes Georgia, Hixon said.

Palmetto Pipeline

Also on Wednesday, the

state House of Representatives passed a bill designed to clarify the state's eminent domain

laws. The bill would restrict private, for profit, companies from seizing private property by use of eminent domain.

The House passed the bill by a 89-3 vote.

Among other things, the bill, primarily sponsored by Sen. Tom Young, R-Aiken, is to "provide procedures for the exercise of eminent domain by pipeline companies," according to its text.

Title: **Gun reciprocity bill heads to Haley**
 Author: BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND ccleveland@aikenstandard.com
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Texas-based Kinder Morgan proposed building a pipeline in order to move more than 7 million gallons per day of gasoline, diesel and ethanol from Belton to Jacksonville, Florida.

The Palmetto Pipeline, a proposed 360-mile fuel pipeline, would run through Abbeville, Aiken, Anderson, Edgefield, Greenwood and McCormick counties in South Carolina, in addition to other parts of Georgia and Florida, according to previous reports by the *Aiken Standard*.

In a statement in March, the company announced it suspended work on the pipeline after "unfavorable action" by the Georgia legislature.

The Georgia legislation places a moratorium on the ability of pipeline companies to use eminent domain. Pipeline companies will be allowed to maintain existing pipelines during the moratorium, but cannot be approved for permits during that time, the newspaper reported.

According to the South Carolina legislative website, South

Carolina's bill was read a third time Thursday and sent to the Senate with amendments. The Senate has concurred.

Christina Cleveland is the county government reporter at the *Aiken Standard*. Follow her on Twitter @ChristinaNCleve.



STAFF FILE PHOTO BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND

Handguns sit on display at Crescent Armory in Aiken in January.

Title: **Georgia reciprocity gun bill OK'd**
 Author: TIM SMITH TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
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Georgia reciprocity gun bill OK'd

TIM SMITH

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COLUMBIA - Legislation allowing Georgia concealed weapons permit holders the right to carry their guns in South Carolina and for South Carolina permit holders to do the same in Georgia is headed to Gov. Nikki Haley's desk.

The Senate Wednesday night passed the bill 35-3 after changing it back to the House version.

Sen. Marlon Kimpson, a Charleston Democrat who has decried the lack of hearings this year on expanded background check legislation, had held up the bill with a filibuster and 80 amendments with hours left in this year's legislative session.

But Kimpson signaled Wednesday morning he might withdraw his amendments and allow a final vote if progress continued on talks about work on expanded background check legislation next year.

He apparently was satisfied Wednesday night and agreed to withdraw his amendments and allow a vote on the bill, though still voting against it.

"We accomplished this through the spirit of bi-partisan cooperation," he told the Senate, "because this body has an eye on the next legislative year."

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Larry Martin of Pick-

ens, had been dealing not only with Kimpson's objections also had to deal with an amendment by Sen. Lee Bright, a Spartanburg County Republican, to allow all states' permit holders to be recognized in South Carolina.

Martin thanked both senators and said the bill would be stripped of all amendments, so it could pass just as the House sent it. That means the bill will head to Haley's desk and does not have to go back to the House.

Kimpson said hearings on the expanded background check issue will be held in Charleston.

See GUN BILL, Page 4A

Gun bill

Continued from Page 3A

He said he realizes it will be a difficult issue because there are "hard feelings on both sides."

Kimpson has repeatedly pushed for a hearing on expanded background check legislation this year but Martin had declined, saying he opposed such legislation and did not think it could pass.

He told Kimpson in recent weeks a hearing could be held this summer. Kimpson said the issue was important to those in Charleston because of last year's murders of Sen. Clementa Pinckney and eight of his parishioners by a gunman who authorities said should not have been

able to buy a gun given information known then by local law enforcement that was never seen by FBI background check personnel.

Martin said he believes whatever flaws that prevented the records from being located by the FBI would not have been cured by extra days in the waiting period but said he believes lawmakers should do everything they can to tighten the process.

The bill has been the top scheduled item for debate in the Senate but Kimpson has kept it from passing easily.

Kimpson and other senators argued the Georgia

bill has flaws because Georgia, unlike South Carolina, does not require firearms training and allows 18-year-olds to get permits.

Other senators argued that South Carolina already recognizes other states that allow 18-year-old permit holders.

Kimpson argued Tuesday night that Georgia has collected far fewer records on those who have been adjudicated mentally ill, a factor that should disqualify someone from holding a concealed weapons permit or to buy a gun at a store, than South Carolina, even though South Carolina has less than half of Georgia's population.

He said Wednesday, however, that he realizes most of the chamber likely supports the bill.

"You've got to be willing to fight for something," Kimpson said. "But also, you've got to recognize the numbers. It's a fine line you have to walk to try and achieve as much as you can achieve. You can win the battle but not the war."

Title: **DOT bill headed to Haley**
 Author: TIM SMITH TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
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DOT bill headed to Haley

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COLUMBIA - A road-funding bill that changes the way highway commissioners are chosen is on its way to Gov. Nikki Haley's desk after the House concurred Wednesday with changes made by the Senate with just hours left in this year's legislative session.

The 109-2 vote came the day after

House Speaker Jay Lucas took to the floor to vent over the lack of Senate action on the bill and the governor's silence on the issue.

He urged Haley to immediately sign the bill.

"Today is truly a great day for the people of South Carolina because we finally have a roads bill," Lucas said

afterward. "For the sake of our citizens' safety and our economy's sustainability, I ask Gov. Haley to sign this bill into law as soon as it arrives on her desk. The people of South Carolina should not have to wait any longer

See BILL, Page 4A

Bill

Continued from Page 1A

for their dangerous roads and bridges to be repaired."

The Senate voted 31-10 late Tuesday night to approve a new version of the bill, after hours of talks that included Senate Democrats and Republicans and House leaders.

"This, at the end of the day gives us reform, it gives us funding, it gives us clarity and it sets about the process of making sure South Carolina roadways will not be the laughingstock, the embarrassment and the unfortunate blow out of tires in the state of South Carolina," Rep. Gary Simrill, a Rock Hill Republican who has spearheaded road funding and reform at the Department of Transportation for the past two years, told the House.

The bill provides \$216 million in recurring funding to enable the issuance of bonds totaling \$2.3 billion over 10 years.

That money, in turn, will free up other funds at DOT to provide a total of \$4.3 billion for work on the state's interstates, roads and bridges.

Simrill said the funding will enable the replacement of 399 structurally deficient bridges in the state.

"You never really recognize just how important a bridge is until it isn't there one day," he said.

Lawmakers have cautioned that the bill, while providing much-needed funding for the state's crumbling infrastructure, is not designed as a permanent funding fix. That debate could resume next year.

But the bill is expected to allow for the completion of several major interstate projects, including some on I-85 in the Upstate and the mammoth "Malfunction Junction" intersection of I-26 and I-20 in Columbia

that has befuddled motorists for years.

The bill would allow the governor to nominate all highway commissioners, most of whom would then have to be approved by the legislative delegation in the congressional district from which the commissioner would be nominated. After that, the commissioner would go before a joint screening committee and then be subject to consent by the full Senate. One of the eight commissioners would remain at large, as is the case now, and would not go before any legislative delegation.

Commissioners are currently elected by legislative delegations, except for the at-large commissioner, who is appointed by the governor.

Each of the commissioners would serve at the will of the governor, though any firing would be subject to the legisla-

tive delegation's approval. The state's transportation secretary, who heads DOT, would be selected by the commissioners. The governor currently selects the secretary.

The House had proposed the commissioners all be appointed by the governor with the consent of the General Assembly.

Simrill fielded a bevy of questions about the process, with some complaining about it. But Simrill said his goal from the start was to find consensus on the bill and this system has a consensus in the Senate.

"What I want to do is get something done," he said.

Ted Pitts, president and CEO of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, applauded lawmakers for passing a bill.

"From day one, the chamber has called on

our state's leaders to make roads a top priority and today we are pleased to see that the General Assembly has passed an infrastructure bill that moves our state forward," he said. "S.1258 is a big step in the right direction toward fixing our state's roads and bridges by providing dedicated revenue streams, reforming DOT, improving the STIB process, and allocating resources to begin to bring South Carolina's roads out of the disrepair that has hindered commerce and jeopardized the safety of our citizens for too long."

The bill also would require all State Transportation Infrastructure Bank projects be submitted to the state Department of Transportation Commission for approval and that the threshold for such projects be lowered from \$100 million to \$25 million.

Title: **A penny saved?**
 Author: BY TOM O'DARE TOM.ODARE@MYHORRYNEWS.COM
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A penny saved?

Fate of tourism tax uncertain

BY TOM O'DARE

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A lot of people in the Myrtle Beach area are keeping an eye on the South Carolina House of Representatives this week.

The House is debating the possible future of the Tourism Development Fee that went into effect in Myrtle Beach in 2009 for 10 years.

At stake is a possible loss of millions of dollars in tourism marketing revenues and for Myrtle Beach residents, a huge jump in what they pay in property taxes for their homes.

For visitors, it could mean a little less coming out of their pocket-books when they spend money in Myrtle Beach.

The TDF is a 1 percent tax imposed in the city of Myrtle Beach on

prepared foods, retail sales, accommodations and mixed liquor drinks. The tax expires at the end of 2018 and must be renewed by the state legislature to continue.

The tax currently applies to only municipalities in Horry County and Myrtle Beach is the only city to use it.

At least 80 percent of the revenues from the TDF are earmarked for tourism marketing and in Myrtle Beach most of that money is given to the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of

Commerce to use.

Part of the TDF can also be used for property tax rollbacks. That means a huge savings for residents of Myrtle Beach who have seen a little over 80 percent reduction on their tax bills for primary residences over the

TOURISM TAX, A2

TOURISM TAX: *City Council decides not to hold referendum allowing voters to decide*

FROM PAGE A1

span of the current TDF.

The original law allowed city councils to approve implementing the tax by a supermajority vote of the council.

The law also said a referendum could be held to allow the voters of the city to decide on the tax but the Myrtle Beach City Council decided not to go that route.

Last week, Gov. Nikki Haley vetoed a House version of the TDF renewal because it said the city council could impose the tax again without a referendum of city voters.

"It is my belief that local tax increases—whether they are fees, property millage or local option taxes—should be allowed only if the citizens subject to the tax agree to it through public referendum," Haley said. "Sustaining this

veto would mark another win in the preservation of citizen participation in local government and provide for a more accountable local tax policy."

But all is not lost for the tourism development fee.

This week, the House is debating a Senate-sponsored bill that renews the TDF but only by a referendum of the city voters.

Haley says if the House passes this version, she will

sign it into law because it fits her philosophy of giving citizens the right to vote on new taxes.

Senate bill 1122, sponsored by Horry County senators Luke Rankin, Ray Cleary and Greg Hembree says the referendum can't be held earlier than within the calendar year, which is two years before the expiration of the original tax.

Myrtle Beach city

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Author: BY TOM O'DARE TOM.ODARE@MYHORRYNEWS.COM
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spokesperson Mark Kruea
said there has been some
discussion of holding a refer-

endum this year or next but
nothing has been decided
pending the outcome of the
actions of the General As-
sembly.



Title: **Spending plan heading to Gov. Haley**

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STATE NEWS

Spending plan heading to Gov. Haley

COLUMBIA (AP) — The Legislature has given final approval to a \$7.5 billion spending plan that increases spending on K to 12 schools by more than \$300 million and provides technical colleges more than \$100 million for building improvements and equipment.

The House's vote Wednesday sends legislators' compromise to Gov. Nikki Haley, who has a week to issue her vetoes.

Legislators will return June 15 to deal with those vetoes before the fiscal year starts July 1.

The budget includes a 3.25 percent cost-of-living increase for state employees and a 2 percent raise for public school teachers.

They also will see a step increase for experience, through 23 years in the classroom.

Other education increases include \$9 million to help recruit teachers to poor, rural districts and \$23 million for school buses.