

Title: **Greenville Republicans applaud Walker**
 Author: By Rudolph Bell Staff writer dbell@greenvillenews.com
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Greenville Republicans applaud Walker

By Rudolph Bell

Staff writer
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Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, a likely Republican presidential candidate, drew repeated applause in Greenville Thursday night by ticking off his conservative bona fides in rapid fashion.

About 200 Republicans clapped heartily as Walker talked about surviving a recall election, eliminating a budget deficit, cutting taxes, defunding Planned Parenthood, requiring photo IDs for voting and making Wisconsin a right-to-work state.

The governor slipped out of the party fundraiser at the TD Convention Center without taking questions from members of the audience or numerous reporters at the back of the room.

The reporters were cordoned off from the crowd of GOP donors as they munched barbecue

on white tablecloths, using red and blue napkins.

His appearance was part of a four-city swing through South Carolina 11 months before the state's first-in-the-South presidential preference primary.

Another likely GOP presidential candidate, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, visited South Carolina earlier this week.

He and Walker are at the top of most early polls, though neither has yet officially announced a campaign.

Earlier Thursday, Walker attended a GOP lunch in Columbia, met privately with Gov. Nikki Haley and greeted lawmakers.

He was scheduled to visit Rock Hill and Charleston today for GOP events and a National Rifle Association reception.

Karen Martin, organizer of the Spartanburg Tea Party, said Walker is her top choice for president "right now."

An editor of corporate training materials, Martin said she watched with admiration as Walker triumphed over his political foes in Wisconsin and survived a recall election.

She told herself then that she'd support Walker if he ever ran for president, she said.

"He found out ways to govern as a conservative governor in a very blue state," she said before hearing him speak Thursday.

Martin said she's been too busy helping reorganize precincts to have looked into critics' claims that Walker has flip-flopped on such issues as immi-

gration, ethanol and abortion.

"I think there's not a candidate around that hasn't changed or evolved," she said.

Bob Dowd, a retired New York City police officer and longtime activist with the Greenville County Republican Party who heard Walker, noted that he said nothing about gay marriage.

"I would like to have heard him say unequivocally, 'I'm in favor of marriage between a man and a woman,'" Dowd said.

Spartanburg businessman Barry Wynn said he'd back Bush, just like he supported Bush's father and brother when they ran for president.

Wynn, a former state GOP chair, said Bush possesses the two things a successful candidate needs: "likability" and an "outstanding record."

Title: **DSS: Lawsuit over S.C. kids' needs should be dismissed**
 Author: BY MEG KINNARD Associated Press
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DSS: Lawsuit over S.C. kids' needs should be dismissed

BY MEG KINNARD
 Associated Press

COLUMBIA — State officials want dismissal of a lawsuit accusing South Carolina's child welfare agency of endangering children in its care, saying the case is an attempt to force the court system to get involved in the agency's funding.



Haley

“Plaintiffs’ claims are nothing more than a veiled attempt at asking this Court to instruct the Governor and the Director how to manage the Department and to order the South Carolina General Assembly to allocate additional funds to the Department,” attorneys for the Department of Social Services wrote in court papers filed this week.

Attorneys for director Susan Alford also said federal courts have no jurisdiction over the issues. The children mentioned in the suit, they noted, all have active family court cases, and it’s there that complaints should be handled. In a separate filing, Gov. Nikki Haley says she should be dismissed from the case because she doesn’t oversee DSS and only appoints its director.

Last year, two advocacy groups — Children’s Rights and the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center — sued DSS and Haley, saying the agency failed to provide 11 children with basic health care

South Carolina’s caseloads can be two or three times those of national and state standards, with some caseworkers having 60 or 70 children at a time.

Lawsuit documents

What do you think?

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and the right kind of attention.

One 16-year-old girl has been through at least a dozen placements in about eight years, according to the lawsuit, and was told by a caseworker that she was in a group facility because the agency didn’t have enough foster homes. Other children were reportedly denied necessary therapy for months, abused by caretakers and kept from siblings also in the system.

According to the lawsuit, South Carolina’s caseloads can be two or three times those of national and state standards, with some caseworkers having 60 or 70 children at a time.

The lawsuit echoed findings in an October Legislative Audit Council report, which said DSS relied heavily on unreliable data, failed to request

extra money and ignored growing problems. The audit also said the agency didn’t do enough to ensure children are placed in safe homes.

The audit also found DSS failed to properly investigate abuse allegations and child deaths. DSS said last fall it was aware of problems and welcomed any help it can get.

Alford was easily confirmed earlier this year to lead the agency. Amid bipartisan calls for her ousting, former director Lillian Koller resigned last year, insisting for years she didn’t need additional money or manpower.

In this year’s budget request, the agency had sought for its child-welfare division money for 277 additional employees — 73 percent of them caseworkers and supervisors. It also requested money for 35 additional vulnerable adult caseworkers and 22 more people to inspect daycare providers.

The House’s budget proposal, approved last week, pays for less than half the requested additional child-welfare workers. The House plan instead funds 120 caseworkers total, as well as the 22 daycare inspectors. But the proposal doubles employees’ pay raises.

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Title: **DSSwants advocates' lawsuit dismissed**
 Author: By Meg Kinnard AssociatedPress
 Size: 29.45 square inch
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DSS wants advocates' lawsuit dismissed

Attorneys say courts
have no jurisdiction

By MEG KINNARD
Associated Press

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Vision Statement for Chapin Town Hall:

To instill the highest level of Ethics, Integrity and Excellence in all aspects of Chapin Municipal Operations.

Mission Statement for the Town of Chapin:

To improve the quality of life for residents and businesses in Chapin, SC by being outstanding stewards of taxpayer's money while fostering economic development and job growth.

Mayor's Message

We had a great turn out last Wednesday at Chapin Town Hall for the Lexington County Sheriff's "Meet and Greet" for the four candidates running to represent our county's law enforcement agency. After 42 years, citizens got to hear some fresh ideas that will help our community. Each of the candidates shared their experiences and answered a multitude of questions about they would manage public safety if elected.



We thank the Timberlake Homeowners Association for working with us to provide this important public forum for our citizens.

Two weeks ago, I talked about our concerns over legislation (H. 3490) presented by Rep. Rick Quinn to cap business licenses at \$100. Unfortunately, Mr. Quinn has gotten quite a few new co-sponsors for the bill, including members of our local delegation – Chip Huggins and Nathan Ballentine. I have spoken at length with Mr. Quinn about the short-sighted nature of this bill which will have serious and negative consequences for local municipalities like Chapin. Sadly, Mr. Quinn did not consult with any municipalities about the repercussions of this proposed bill, only small businesses. While he believes that some compromise is appropriate, the end result of changing the business license revenue for municipalities will have a significant negative impact to the services provided to citizens and businesses alike. It's akin to Representative Nancy Pelosi telling Congress and the American voter about the Affordable Care Act, "We need to pass this healthcare bill to see what's in it."

Know the Facts: If this bill passes, Chapin's Police force would be eliminated. Services will be substantially reduced and many eliminated. A total of eight jobs at Town Hall would be eliminated, and property taxes and other impact fees would be passed onto citizens to make up the difference for this shortfall.

Mr. Quinn concludes that basic services provided by Chapin's government are unnecessary, (i.e. police force, zoning law enforcement, municipal court, economic development, etc.) and are responsible for small businesses lack of profitability. This assessment is short-sighted and borderline irresponsible for a legislator charged to represent the best interests of our citizens.



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I appeal to all citizens and businesses and encourage everyone to contact Mr. Quinn directly (803) 212-6897) to let him know how you will be negatively affected if this bill passes. In addition, I'm asking you to contact each legislator that co-sponsored his bill to reconsider and remove their name as a sponsor – Rep. Merrill, Atwater, Rivers, Kennedy, Erickson, Tallon, Loftis, Taylor, Putnam, Goldfinch, Ballentine, Bedingfield, Finlay, Forrester, Hamilton, Hardwick, Herbkersman, Hicks, Huggins, Sandifer and Toole.

I also agree with Gov. Haley's proposal to fund the roads by raising the gas tax by 10 cents but requires a two percent decrease in the state's personal income tax. We need to compete with the bordering states that have lower or no state income tax. Having a lower state income tax will encourage people to move to our state or prevent them from leaving SC to neighboring states. And the increase in gas tax will generate roughly \$400 million a year.

Last but not least, I believe Ethics Reform is critical and necessary. It's time that our legislators realize that they will never gain the trust of the voters if they continue to ignore what the voter wants. As reported in The State newspapers recently, the legislative ethics committees oversee their own members' campaign filings, while the State Ethics Commission is responsible for all other filings from state and locally elected officials. Every legislator is accountable to the voters, not just their peers in the General Assembly. The public is wearing thin on good ol' boy politics that protects legislators who use their position for personal gain. It's time to stand up, be accountable and transparent for our citizens.

Together We Stand!
Mayor Skip Wilson



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SC agriculture and forestry has 23 percent growth

234 + 148

South Carolina agriculture growth in jobs and our agri- drivers for our state."

billion over the impact assess-

South Carolina agriculture and forestry have grown 23 percent since 2006 to have an annual economic impact of \$41.7 billion and support 212,000 jobs.

These figures were shared when Governor Nikki Haley and Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers unveiled a study conducted by Dr. James London, London & Associates of Clemson. The study was commissioned by the Palmetto AgriBusiness Council, South Carolina Department of Agriculture, South Carolina Farm Bureau and Clemson University Public Service Activities.

"The news that agriculture and forestry mean tens of billions of dollars for our economy and 212,000 jobs for our people is a real reason to celebrate," said Governor Haley. "We have invested in agribusiness and in our rural areas, our farmers know we continue to have their back, and working with Commissioner Weathers, we're going to keep South Carolina on the move."

South Carolina's diverse Agribusiness Cluster consists of 60 sectors in the agriculture

component and 29 sectors in the forestry component - generating \$41.7 billion total and \$26.8 billion in direct output. In aggregate, these sectors account for 9.1 percent of economic activity, 10.5 percent of the state's workforce and \$8.8 billion in labor income in South Carolina.

"It's exciting to see this

growth in jobs and our agribusiness economy," said Hugh Weathers, S.C. Commissioner of Agriculture. "The numbers also help portray the magnitude and powerful influence of this great industry in our state. We must continue to actively support our farmers and producers in South Carolina to generate an even greater impact on the rural economy as well as job growth."

"Agriculture and forestry share a rich heritage in South Carolina," said David Winkles, president of the S.C. Farm Bureau. "Those sectors, including food, fiber and forest products and support services continue to be major economic

drivers for our state."

Much of the growth can be attributed to the "50 x 20" plan

pushed by the South Carolina Department of Agriculture along with the Palmetto Agribusiness Council and the South Carolina Farm Bureau and the 20/15 Project led by the South Carolina Forestry Commission and the SC Forestry Association. The 50 x 20 plan calls for increasing the economic impact of the Agribusiness Cluster to \$50 billion by the year 2020. The 20/15 Project calls for the forest industry to have a \$20 billion impact by year 2015. Reaching these targets would increase Agribusiness's impact by \$16

billion over the impact assessment for the year 2006.

"The purpose of this effort is to let South Carolinians know that the agribusiness industry is focused on the future, not the past," said Gene Kodama, S.C. State Forester. "The outlook for this sector has improved significantly and will continue to make great strides, creating more jobs and driving economic growth for years to come."

To download the full study, visit <http://scagribusiness.org/agstudy>.

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ers of goods. It was a day filled with fun and excitement

PHOTO PROVIDED

148 Gov. Haley forges partnership to boost S.C. workforce services

Governor Nikki Haley, along with a dozen state leaders, formalized a partnership Thursday that will boost South Carolina's public workforce system, SC Works.

The ultimate goal is to unify numerous workforce programs into a single, integrated customer-focused network in each local community.

"Workforce development is critical to maintaining our state's reputation as a top destination for businesses to invest and expand," Gov. Haley said. "The business community has made it clear to me that it needs skilled workers. Businesses want to hire South Carolinians."

The organizations that have come together today have the tools to ensure we have the skilled workforce for businesses now and far into the future. South Carolinians expect streamlined services that make their lives easier, and this new level of partnership among such diverse organizations will ultimately deliver services more efficiently to our businesses and citizens."

The following agencies and organizations signed the partnership agreement:

Office of the Governor (Office of Economic Opportunity)
Department of Corrections
Department of Juvenile Justice
Department of Social Services
Indian Development Council



Lieutenant Governor's Office
on Aging
Vocational Rehabilitation Department
Department of Employment and Workforce
Department of Education
Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services
Job Corps
SC Technical College System

"Our state is experiencing record levels of economic prosperity with more South Carolinians working than ever before thanks to Gov. Haley's leadership and the effort of our workforce partners," said Cheryl M. Stanton, executive

director of the SC Department of Employment and Workforce. "The strategic partnership that has come together today will deliver better and more efficient results for South Carolinians."

"It is refreshing to see so many state agencies and other partners working together collaboratively to make our workforce system more efficient," said Rep. Mike Forrester. "Today is historic on many levels, but more importantly I look forward to the positive results and opportunity for South Carolinians."

The formal partnership agreement is the culmination of discussions that began more than a year ago among agencies impacting workforce development.

The initiative was spearheaded by the State Workforce Investment Board.

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Sen. Sabb updates constituents on statehouse activities

The 121st session of the S.C. Senate assembled at noon on Jan. 13. I was welcomed into the Senate and in accordance with the provisions of Rule 35, the privilege of the floor was also extended to my family. Sen. Leatherman was elected President Pro Tempore by acclamation.

Other elections ended with the following results, Jeffrey Stephen Gossett elected as Clerk of the Senate, John Othniel Wienges elected as Reading



Ronnie Sabb

Senator's Update

Clerk, the Rev. Dr. James I. St. John elected as the Chaplain and James R. Melton elected as

Sergeant-at-Arms by acclamation.

All pre-filed bills were introduced and referred to the appropriate committees for consideration.

"Our challenge is that South Carolina continues to be the

kind of place where it doesn't matter where you grew up nor does it matter what you grew up with," senators said.

The second Inauguration of the One Hundredth Seventeenth Governor of South

Carolina, Nikki R. Haley, and the Inauguration of the Lt. Governor, Henry D. McMaster, and our Constitutional Officers took place on Jan. 14.

On Jan. 21, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to move the Ethics Bill and the Criminal Domestic Violence Bill to the full senate. Later that evening the Senate and House members assembled for the sole purpose of attending the State of the State, given by the Governor.

As always, if you have concerns or needs please contact my administrative assistant. Thank you for the opportunity to serve. Office telephone is 803-212- 6032; e-mail is ron-niesabb@scsenate.gov; You may also contact my District 32 Director, Demar Roberts, at demar@sabblaw.com

Provided by Sen. Ronnie A. Sabb, (D-32, Berkeley, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Williamsburg Counties)



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Footp bringing 115 jobs to county

From staff reports

A vacant industrial facility in Chester County will soon be rising from the ashes.

Footprint, LLC, a company that specializes in the direct manufacturing of sustainable materials and packaging, is establishing manufacturing

operations in Chester County. Footprint went by the code name "Project: Phoenix" when being discussed by Chester County Council in recent weeks. Third reading of a fee-in-lieu-of-tax and incentive agreement was passed unanimously on Monday.

The company is invest-

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ing \$15.4 million to establish the facility, creating an expected 115 new jobs over the next five years.

Headquartered in Gilbert, Ariz., Footprint was founded by two former employees of the Intel Corporation, Troy Swope and Yoke Chung. Determined to change the way products are manufactured and packaged, Footprint provides economical and environmentally-friendly packaging solutions to its customers. Since its inception, the firm has seen significant growth and currently operates facilities in three countries, including the

Council for Economic Development has approved job development credits related to the project.

Swope said available workforce played a big part in the company's decision to locate in Chester.

"We are very excited about our South Carolina operation and the unique geographic and technical advantage it will provide. When looking at the available workforce and our next generation of sustainable materials and manufacturing technologies, South Carolina became the clear choice for our new state of the art facility," Swope said.

Gov. Nikki Haley said the announcement is

tices.

Chester County Supervisor Carlisle Roddey said this announcement, coming on the heels of the groundbreaking at the site of the Giti Tire plant last week, is a sign that investing in economic development has paid off in the county.

"We are confident that Footprint, LLC will find an excellent environment for future growth. Our focus will continue to be centered on creating new and better paying job opportunities for the hard-working citizens of Chester County. This \$15.4 million investment and the 115 new jobs it brings are another sign that Chester County's hard work in eco-

United States, Mexico and China. Among the industries that Footprint serves are consumer goods, food and beverage, produce and horticulture and product manufacturing.

To house its Chester County operations, Footprint is leasing a 109,000-square-foot building at 546 L&C Distribution Park in Richburg, S.C. As the firm's newest and most advanced manufacturing facility, the Chester County operations will focus on the production and delivery of sustainable packaging materials for the company's East Coast and Canadian customers.

The Coordinating

another win for South Carolina in general and Chester specifically.

"The news that Footprint, LLC has made the decision to do business in South Carolina is a tremendous reason to celebrate across the state. The \$15.4 million investment and the 115 new jobs they are creating in Chester County will make a real difference in the local community, and we look forward to watching them grow there for many years to come." —Gov. Nikki Haley

State Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt called Footprint "Innovative" and said he was impressed with their sustainable business prac-

conomic development has paid off," Roddey said.

Chester Development Association Chairman Brian Singleton said Chester is getting "a technology focused company that is investing over \$15 million in an existing industrial building and bringing 115 more jobs to the area."

Hiring for the new positions is anticipated to start in the third quarter of 2015 and continue through 2016 as new manufacturing lines are installed. Those interested in applying may submit a resume at jobs@FootprintUS.com. For more information on Footprint, LLC, visit www.footprintus.com.





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148 State, local officials, community leaders comment on Giti groundbreaking

BY BRIAN GARNER
bgarnier@onlinechester.com

A lot of people had a lot of positive things to say at last week's groundbreaking for the Giti Tire plant. Here's a collection of their comments:

"This is the best day I can remember, a beautiful day. I told someone a while

ago they better look around, not just here but around the area, because this whole county will

never be the same after today. It's all going to change." – **Carlisle Roddey, Chester County supervisor**

"We've waited for such a long time for this day to come, and I hope the peo-

ple of Chester County are excited." – **Karlisa Parker, Chester County Economic Development eirector**

"We are grateful Giti Tire is here. This plant is way back in the woods, but

we are grateful they are here. We are proud that (the Richburg area) was the area they chose to build

a facility to give people in the surrounding areas and in Chester County jobs.

"This means things are going to grow, the economy is going to be great and with Giti Tire here, it will cause other businesses and industries to come here and build, so we're going to grow. To Giti Tire, I say

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COMMENTS

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thank you so much for choosing Richburg and Chester County for your facility, and we hope you'll be happy here, and your company will be prosperous. Welcome to the family." – **James Harris, mayor of Richburg**

"This an amazing day. I remember the first time **Andre (LeBlanc, senior project manager, Global Business Development)** and I stepped onto this site...this is a remarkable site, and I think this is the beginning of a remarkable journey for Giti Tire, Chester County and South Carolina. I see an amazing time the next couple of years as this plant site gets built out, and as the company grows itself into maturity. I think there's going to be a remarkable change in the area, and I think everyone will remember this day." – **S.C. Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt**

"Look at the land and see what development is happening here. \$560 million (the amount of investment Giti Tire will make in their manufacturing and distribution facility) invested in Chester County and 1,700 jobs. This is a game-changer, not just for Chester County, because Giti is one of the top 10 tire companies in the world who has chosen to make South Carolina their home. This is their first North American plant, and the fact they trusted South Carolina and invested in us, is a huge honor.

Anytime you have a manufacturer come into the area, you're going to see (all along the I-77 corridor) suppliers coming in and a lot more business coming closer. You're going to look at this property in 10 years from now, and it will look completely differ-

ent than it does today.

(On the Giti Tire family owners, the Liems visiting Chester County) "When Mr. and Mrs. Liem came, along with Dr. Tan, one of the requests they made was they wanted to ride

through the City of Chester, and when I asked Mrs. Liem why, she said 'I want to see the people. I want to see who our family is going to be.' And the decision to come here was very much as much to do with the community as it was to do with the numbers. This was a family-oriented company that wanted a family-oriented community...It really says a lot about Chester County and the people of Chester County, because they really put their arms around Giti Tire."

Think about it – 1,700 jobs in a community like Chester County, that has really asked for this for a long time and needed it for a long time. Look at any type of plant we have in South Carolina – it becomes a city and that's what Chester County is getting ready to have here. Across the state, every time you put in a megaplant like this, everything around it, from residential to commercial to industrial changes and grows. That's what Giti Tire has just done for Chester County, it has changed the face of the county." – **S.C. Governor Nikki Haley**

(As far as hiring procedures) "Now that we've broken ground, we'll put some (training and hiring) timelines out and get them into the hands of the state. That will be well known shortly.

(On why Giti chose Chester) The infrastructure was one reason why we chose Chester County, but the family, Mr. and Mrs. Liem, they bought into the people – they felt the passion and the eager-

ness and the American ideal of a tremendous work ethic. And that's the real key element that brought the decision-making process to Chester County." – **Armand Allaire, executive vice president of Sales and Marketing for Giti Tire (USA)**

Governor Haley said the training for the Giti jobs would be through www.readySC.org/giti. Interested citizens could sign up with them right

now to be prepared when any training announcements would be made.

"This is tremendous. With the revenue that's going to be brought in to the county, it will be distributed more to the Sheriff's Office and other agencies in the county. Overall, it's just an outstanding thing to have Giti come here." – **Chester County Sheriff Alex Underwood**

"The future is here. This project will totally transform the landscape in Chester County and in this region. A project of this magnitude, on a parcel that's some 1,100-some acres provides this company and the county the ability to grow a job base and a tax base for years to come. We're all very proud the leadership of the county and all the other allies worked hand-in-hand with the state to bring this great project here." – **Steve Gedney, senior vice president with the Lancaster & Chester Railroad, which is now owned by the Gulf & Ohio**

"We're exceedingly excited to have Giti Tire here. This is a wonderful project, it's nice to see the heavy equipment here, and to see some of the hurdles (to getting the project started) overcome

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and the project moving forward. We can't wait to start seeing Giti Tire here (across the road). We may want to work out some logistics of shift rotations, depending on when our shifts run and their shifts run. Our entrances are right across the road from each other. We welcome them as a new neighbor."

— **Chris Winters, Sun Fiber Chester Plant director of Human Resources**

"Just like the Governor says, it's a great day in South Carolina, and especially in Chester County. We are anticipating great things coming about from here. We've done our homework and we are looking forward to the new

industries, and all the other things associated with Giti Tire." — **Chester County Council Vice Chairman Joe Branham**

"This plant is going to

change the area for the better. I look forward to a lot of suppliers following Giti down here. Governor Haley has been very accessible to all the business prospects who have looked at South Carolina, she's provided a personal touch, and that's something we didn't have with our last governor." — **S.C. Rep. Greg Delleney**

"This is big-time stuff for our little corner of the world. I'm excited and excited for what's going to happen along this I-77 corridor, not only for Chester, but for Fairfield and Lancaster." — **S.C. Rep. MaryGail Douglas**

"Duke Energy is excited to be the power provider for Giti Tire, but I don't think we can lose sight of the fact of what a great team effort this was — from the state level the local level, from economic development. What this really is a lesson in patience and perseverance. I think

Chester County deserves a lot of credit for being willing to stick to their strategic plan, stick to their guns, they knew they had something valuable (in the Carolinas Megasite) they didn't cut it up, they left it as a megasite, they marketed it as a megasite, and that patience paid off today. When people see good companies like Giti locating here, they start to think about why, and whether they should be locating here. We are on the map, and that is huge." — **Rick Jiran, Duke Energy director of Government and Community Relations**

"We are working very hard to move things forward. As you know, this is not any easy job — it's a complicated project with a lot of people. We're trying our best, so let's pray and keep going." — **Dr. Enki Tan, executive chairman, Giti Tire Group**



Gaffney Ledger
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148 Address issues at DSS right away

We think Gov. Nikki Haley's pick to lead the state's Department of Social Services has the right idea in proposing a comprehensive review of operations at every DSS office in the state. But, if approved by the Legislature, she should act right away to address some pressing problems that already are well documented.

In one of what are likely to be several confirmation hearings, Susan Alford said she wants to visit each county, assess its needs and hear why caseworkers leave the agency. She told the Senate General Committee that caseload problems are closely associat-

ed to turnover, and she plans to address both by using her experience to probe the department's "ground game" at the county level.

During the daylong county meetings, Alford said she would meet with local law enforcement, solicitors, guardians and caseworkers. She especially hopes to get a sense of how each of the state's 46 counties is handling its responsibilities to care for children.

Alford, 60, appears to have the experience to tackle the job. She has been director of The Girls Center at Clemson University since 2007, a research hub for issues such as teen pregnancy and poor self-esteem.

She also worked at the Department of Juvenile Justice for more than 12 years in various director roles and served as director of the state's probation and parole agency.

Alford would replace Lillian Koller, who resigned last year amid calls for her head from members of both parties. Haley was slow in realizing that Koller was in real trouble, attributing the criticism to election-year politics, but Koller resigned a day before the Senate was due to take up a no-confidence vote on her leadership.

Alford said making substantive changes at DSS could take years. She warned lawmakers not to start criticizing the agency if they don't see drastic improvements in the next year or two.

Certainly the agency's operation deserves an in-depth evaluation such as this. Alford no doubt is on the right track in trying to get at the root causes of high turnover rates. Once she has identified why so many people leave the agency, she can begin to seek sensible remedies.

But Alford does not have to start from scratch on this effort. The Senate already has produced an improvement plan after a year's worth of bipartisan hearings investigating child deaths, excessive caseloads and turnover.

Among other things, the plan, released in October, calls for adding 221 child welfare positions this fiscal year.

Many of the agency's problems, especially regarding child welfare, have been common knowledge for years, in fact,



decades. A federal class action lawsuit was filed Jan. 12 against Haley and DSS, saying a lack of health care and other basic services is endangering children in the system.

The complaint alleges Haley and DSS are responsible for drastic foster home shortages, too many caseloads for workers and a failure to provide children with basic health care. The lawsuit also alleges that child maltreatment while in foster care is not adequately investigated, and inaccurate data masks a much higher rate of abuse and neglect than the state reports to the federal government.

Whatever the outcome of the lawsuit, it raises red flags. And in light of the seriousness of the allegations, action should be taken right away.

We hope Alford, if approved for the job, will find a reasonable balance between thoroughly investigating the agency's operations while also acting quickly to ensure that children in the system now are being well cared for. Children who aren't getting proper care can't afford to wait years for a change.

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