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Governor Nikki Haley News:

Associated Press: SC legislators tentatively agree to restructuring
http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=3KPZXUg9
Seanna Adcox

Key South Carolina lawmakers reached a tentative deal Thursday on a government restructuring bill that's become a signature issue for both Gov. Nikki Haley and her Democratic challenger. A measure called the largest overhaul of state government in two decades is again approaching passage as a committee of three House and three Senate members unanimously approved a compromise. Supporters say it streamlines and modernizes state government.

Note: Haley made it a centerpiece of her agenda as she campaigned in 2010. The next year, she attempted to force the Legislature to return to Columbia to pass the bill, but the state Supreme Court ruled she couldn't do that.

Florence Morning News: Pee Dee legislators mull '14-'15 budget
http://www.scnow.com/news/politics/article_023ab6e8-7f10-11e3-8c29-001a4bcf6878.html
Gavin Jackson

Gov. Nikki Haley released her \$6.6 billion budget plan for 2014-2015 on Monday, which is up 3.73 percent from last year. General fund recurring funds come from \$2 billion in sales and use tax, \$3.5 billion in individual income tax, \$345 million in corporate income tax and \$755.2 million in other recurring sources. State economic advisers said they expect \$256 million in new recurring revenue along with one-time revenues will total \$400 million in new funding.

Post and Courier: S.C. Senate passes guns in restaurants bill
<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20140116/PC1610/140119541/1031/sc-senate-passes-guns-in-restaurants-bill>
Jeremy Borden

Score one for gun rights, sign makers and quizzical glances from tourists. South Carolina senators passed a bill Thursday that would allow those with concealed weapons permits to carry their guns into restaurants and bars. Senators made several technical changes, which are expected to be adopted by the House next week and sent to Gov. Nikki Haley soon after. A Haley spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Note: About 200,000 South Carolinians, including Haley, hold concealed-carry permits. The governor took to social media recently to post a photo of the new pistol she received as a Christmas present.

The State: Action needed now for SC's mentally ill inmates, advocates say
<http://www.thestate.com/2014/01/16/3211032/action-needed-now-for-scs-mentally.html#storylink=cpy>
John Monk

South Carolina mental health advocates are urging the state prison system to follow a judge's order and draw up a detailed plan within 180 days to reform the S.C. Department of Corrections mental illness programs – even if Corrections appeals the judge's decision. "They have to have a plan to make things happen," said Bill Lindsey, the executive director of the S.C. chapter of the National Alliance for Mental Illness, the state's largest mental health advocacy group.

Note: Since Baxley's decision, Gov. Nikki Haley has said publicly that many of the judge's findings are outdated. She did not respond Thursday to a request for comment. The petition, now signed by more than 200 people, asks Stirling and Haley not to appeal.

Rock Hill Herald: Money for school technology limited in Haley plan – but welcomed by York Co. educators
<http://www.heraldonline.com/2014/01/16/5589082/funding-for-technology-limited.html>

Rachel Southmayd

In the \$160 million education plan Gov. Nikki Haley unveiled last week, she calls for raising one-time spending on “digital instruction materials” to \$12 million in 2014-2015 – three times the amount the state spent this year – and \$4 million to train teachers how to use technology in their classrooms. Those technology allocations would be based on the “poverty index” of each district. That means all four York County districts and Lancaster County schools would get \$35 per student, while Chester County would get \$50 per student.

2014 Campaign Cycle News:

The State: Vincent Sheheen targeting Nikki Haley on DSS now

<http://www.thestate.com/2014/01/16/3211867/morning-buzz-vincent-sheheen-targeting.html#storylink=cpy>

Adam Beam, Andrew Shain

State Sen. Vincent Sheheen hit all of his talking points when speaking with reporters on Thursday, including criticizing the governor for the data breach at the Department of Revenue and her handling of a tuberculosis outbreak in Greenwood County. But then he flashed a new weapon: DSS.

Note: Haley spokesman Doug Mayer told The Buzz that “final passage of the Department of Administration bill would be a great bipartisan achievement for our state.” “It’s a shame, but I guess at this point not much of a surprise, that Sen. Sheheen would use this moment to try to promote his personal political agenda in such a silly way,” Mayer said. Privately, Haley’s aides wondered why Sheheen voted against the previous version of the Department of Administration bill, the 2012 version that died on the last day of the legislative session.

S.C. Political News:

Associated Press: 2nd Republican jumps into SC superintendent's race

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=L7W7B1IY

Republican activist Sheri Few is announcing she's running for South Carolina schools superintendent. Few says that she will declare her candidacy Friday outside the state Department of Education's offices. Her platform involves blocking education standards known as Common Core. Few was the state campaign director for U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann during the Minnesota Republican's 2012 presidential bid. Few previously ran a nonprofit that advocated abstinence-only education in public schools.

Aiken Standard: Candidate talks vouchers, early childhood education

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20140117/AIK0101/140119495/1004/candidate-talks-vouchers-early-childhood-education>

Teddy Kulmala

S.C. Rep. Mike Anthony, D-Union, didn't need a microphone to address the Aiken County Democratic Party on Thursday night – after 40 years of being a teacher and a coach, he said he knows how to make his voice get loud. Anthony's experience with the education system, as a teacher and now as a legislator, is what sets him apart from the three other candidates running to be South Carolina's next superintendent of education, he said.

Opinion / Editorial Roundup:

Aiken Standard: Long debated overhaul bill worth passing

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20140117/AIK02/140119535/1018/AIK02/editorial-long-debated-overhaul-bill-worth-passing>

Editorial

The light at the end of the tunnel appears closer than ever for government reconstructing. South Carolina lawmakers have reportedly reached a deal that would settle a decade-long debate over scrapping the much-maligned Budget and Control Board and creating a new Department of Administration. Passing the bill would not only transfer purely executive functions over to the governor's office, it would also provide the legislature with much-needed oversight that will ultimately make state government more transparent.

The State: SC should improve treatment of mentally ill inmates, not appeal judge's order

<http://www.thestate.com/2014/01/16/3211153/editorial-sc-should-improve-treatment.html#storylink=cpy>

Editorial

Sadly, there is little surprising about a judge's ruling that the state of South Carolina long has treated

mentally ill inmates poorly and must clean up its act. For years, our state's "lock 'em up and throw away the key" mentality led to inexcusable neglect, as legislators passed laws that increased the inmate population without providing adequate funding to help the Department of Corrections deal with overcrowding, rehabilitation, inmate care and other critical elements of its mission.

Note: The agency has said it will appeal. But Gov. Nikki Haley should direct it to stand down. Instead, the department, Gov. Haley and the Legislature should focus on formulating a plan to improve the treatment of the mentally ill.

Times and Democrat: No doubt Harrell upset, but process not to be altered

http://thetandd.com/news/opinion/no-doubt-harrell-upset-but-process-not-to-be-altered/article_feead1d8-7ef8-11e3-866f-001a4bcf887a.html

Editorial

THE ISSUE: Investigation of House speaker. OUR VIEW: Harrell has right to claim political targeting, but process now must go forward unimpeded. It's not hard to see why South Carolina House Speaker Bobby Harrell feels like he has been blindsided by political allies. On Monday, Republican Attorney General Alan Wilson sent a State Law Enforcement Division review of ethics allegations against Harrell to the state grand jury, an action that Harrell said came as a surprise.

Greenville News: Make HQ recruitment a priority

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2014301170002>

Editorial

As Greenville keeps striving to diversify its economy and make itself more resistant to future economic downturns, an obvious place to turn is recruiting corporate headquarters to the area. Doing it is easier said than done, of course, but the protocol was clearly laid out in a report last week by Greenville News reporter Rudolph Bell. The ingredients are simple, and Greenville already has many of them in place.

Post and Courier: Harrell probe driving lawmakers to distraction, devious schemes

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20140117/PC16/140119532/1006/harrell-probe-driving-lawmakers-to-distraction-devious-schemes>

Brian Hicks

Bobby Harrell's ears must have been burning Wednesday — and not just because he's waylaid with the flu. The Statehouse, which remains South Carolina's biggest high school, was atwitter with gossip and speculation surrounding the news that a grand jury is going to investigate the House speaker on accusations that he misused campaign funds. The forecasts range from Armageddon to "it'll blow over," but even the most optimistic have a worried look in their eyes.

Island Packet: Fee dispute best solved by SC Supreme Court

<http://www.islandpacket.com/2014/01/16/2896382/fee-dispute-best-solved-by-sc.html#storylink=cpy>

Editorial

It's good news for businesses and local governments alike that the state's highest court will rule on whether the Town of Hilton Head Island may collect more in business-license fees from a company with primarily out-of-state sales. The town sued laser-component maker, Kigre, in 2006 after the company challenged the town's right to collect the fees based on the company's gross receipts.

Legislative Session News:

The State: SC House's top Democrat: Let same-sex married couples file joint tax returns

<http://www.thestate.com/2014/01/16/3211602/sc-houses-top-democrat-let-same.html#storylink=cpy>

Adam Beam

The S.C. House's top Democrat filed a proposal Thursday that would allow same-sex couples married in other states to file joint state tax returns in South Carolina. The bill — H. 4461, filed by state Rep. Todd Rutherford of Richland County — comes as Gov. Nikki Haley's administration has proposed a rule to require gay couples married in other states, but living in South Carolina, to file separate state tax returns.

The State: Bill allowing guns in bars, restaurants closer to becoming law

<http://www.thestate.com/2014/01/16/3211585/bill-allowing-guns-in-sc-bars.html#storylink=cpy>

Jamie Self

A bill to allow concealed firearms in businesses that serve alcohol cleared a critical hurdle Thursday as the state Senate passed the proposal without the midnight curfew that Senate Democrats had insisted on. The

bill that the Senate returned to the House would allow people who have licenses to carry concealed weapons to carry guns into bars or restaurants as long as they do not drink alcohol. Businesses also could decide not to allow firearms on their property by posting signs.

Aiken Standard: S.C. Sen. Tom Young files penny sales tax bill

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20140117/AIK0101/140119522/1004/sc-sen-tom-young-files-penny-sales-tax-bill>

Derrek Asberry

S.C. Sen. Tom Young, R-Aiken, filed legislation on Wednesday that seeks to give the Aiken County School Board the option of asking voters if they would prefer a one-cent sales tax to raise funding for education capital improvements to paying additional property taxes. According to Young, that option is already available to 20 other counties in South Carolina. The option is not currently available in Aiken County because it does not collect at least \$7 million in accommodations taxes.

Aiken Standard: Potato farms offers compromise on irrigation plan

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20140117/AIK0101/140119521/potato-farms-offers-compromise-on-irrigation-plan>

Amy Banton

The owners of a massive potato farm located in Aiken County are proposing dramatic changes to the farm's initial plans to irrigate its property. Walther Farms, which owns several thousand acres in the Windsor area, is offering several compromises in effort to address concerns by various environmental organizations across the state, according to S.C. Department of Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers.

S.C. Federal Delegation News:

Greenwood Today: Duncan files new version of EXPAND Act

<http://gwdtoday.com/main.asp?SectionID=2&SubSectionID=27&ArticleID=28239>

Brian King

Third District Rep. Jeff Duncan on Thursday filed a new version of the Energy Exploration to Achieve National Demand (EXPAND) Act which would open up area off the Atlantic Coast for energy exploration, potentially creating thousands of jobs and bringing billions of dollars in revenue to South Carolina. In Dec. 2013, a new study by the National Ocean Industries Association (NOIA) revealed that, if the federal government would allow South Carolina to pursue energy exploration off its coast, the state could expect over 35,500 jobs, \$2.7 billion in annual economic activity and potentially \$3.7 billion in cumulative state revenue by 2035.

South Carolina News:

Greenville News: Prison improvements for inmates with mental illness disputed

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2014301170025>

Tim Smith

While state prison officials say steps have been taken to improve the treatment of inmates with serious mental illness, advocates for the mentally ill say the agency hasn't made any major improvements in the 11 deficiencies found by a judge last week. Gloria Prevost, executive director with Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities, the plaintiff in the 2005 lawsuit that resulted in last week's ruling, and Joy Jay, executive director of Mental Health America of South Carolina, said the state's prison system argued during the 2012 trial that it had made corrections to serious deficiencies in the agency's treatment of inmates with mental illness.

Greenville News: Effort seeks to revive Voting Rights Act

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2014301170018>

Mary Orndorff Troyan

A proposal to revive a law that required certain states to prove their election procedures weren't discriminatory wouldn't immediately affect some Deep South states with a history of suppressing minority voting, including South Carolina. Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., Rep. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., and Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., introduced legislation Thursday that would breathe new life into the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which the Supreme Court partially struck down last year.

Post and Courier: DOT Commission elects new leaders

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20140116/PC16/140119534/1006/>

The South Carolina Department of Transportation Commission on Thursday elected W.B. Cook of Gaffney as its new chairman and Jim Rozier of Berkeley County as vice-chairman. Also, the Commission recognized five outgoing Commission members whose terms are expiring. They are John P. Edwards, Harrison Rearden, Craig Forrest, Chad Ingram and Eddie Adams.

Local News:

Florence Morning News: Florence County Council approves issuance and sale of \$125 million in bonds
http://www.snow.com/news/politics/article_73fd9114-7f0c-11e3-8a37-001a4bcf6878.html

Gavin Jackson

Members of Florence County Council started off 2014 by approving the county's largest bond, offering for hundreds of capital projects and a clean fiscal bill of health. Council unanimously approved its third and final reading of an ordinance Thursday for the issuance and sale of \$125 million in bonds, a little more than two months after voters approved such a measure at the polls to fund capital improvement projects throughout the county.

The State: Columbia SC crowd objects to taxpayer-funded baseball park

<http://www.thestate.com/2014/01/16/3211939/columbia-sc-crowd-objects-to-taxpayer.html#storylink=cpy>

Clif LeBlanc

A crowd hostile to any public funding for a baseball stadium in the proposed Bull Street neighborhood vented its ire Thursday. "Why should any tax dollars be used to subsidize him to make money?" asked one man, referring to Jason Freier, owner of Hardball Capital, which is seeking to move one of its minor-league teams to Columbia. A crowd of about 60 people attended a forum organized at Woodlands Park by two City Council members who have been critical of the city building a stadium to attract professional baseball to the capital city.

Greenville News: Upstate foreclosures decline in 2013

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2014301170027>

Angelia Davis

Residential foreclosures in every Upstate county dropped in 2013, when filings nationwide fell to their lowest level in six years. According to RealtyTrac's Year-End 2013 U.S. Foreclosure Market Report, foreclosure filings — default notices, scheduled auctions and bank repossessions — were reported on 1,361,795 U.S. properties in 2013. That represents a 26 percent decrease from 2012 and a 53 percent decline from the peak of 2.9 million properties with foreclosure filings in 2010.

The State: Major school upgrade proposed in Lexington 2

<http://www.thestate.com/2014/01/16/3211936/major-school-upgrade-proposed.html#storylink=cpy>

Tim Flach

Lexington 2 needs two new elementary schools and extensive renovation of other facilities, an advisory panel told school board members Thursday. The improvements would cost more than \$200 million if all are accepted, Superintendent Venus Holland estimated. Those recommendations are first step toward a referendum as soon as this fall on a property tax increase of an unknown size to pay for the improvements.

Island Packet: Hilton Head Airport passenger numbers drop for 3rd consecutive year

<http://www.islandpacket.com/2014/01/16/2897460/hilton-head-airport-passenger.html#storylink=cpy>

Dan Burley

Traveler numbers at Hilton Head Island Airport declined for the third consecutive year in 2013, as passenger totals dropped to their lowest levels since Delta Air Lines suspended service in 2010. Slightly more than 117,000 passengers arrived or departed from the airport last year, about 5,000 fewer than in 2012 and nearly 55,000 fewer than when traffic peaked in 2007, according to Beaufort County Airports Board statistics. "Numbers continued to drop this year," board member Will Dopp said as he read the statistics to the board Thursday.

Sun News: Myrtle Beach area foreclosure rates still in top 10, but falling faster than other SC areas

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/2014/01/16/3963163/myrtle-beach-area-foreclosure.html#storylink=cpy>

Steve Jones

Horry County finished 2013 with the sixth highest foreclosure rate in the state, which had the eighth highest rate in the nation -- statistics that local and state real estate officials find hard to explain. Foreclosures have

tapered off noticeably in Horry County and much of the rest of the state in the last year, and a considerable decline in the number of distressed properties for sale has led to modest price increases for homes and condos in the local market, at least.

National News:

Associated Press: Christie facing GOP donors as bridge scandal boils

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268798/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=ZfpRLn3y

Ken Thomas and Michael J. Mishak

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie faces one of his first major tests since his backyard political scandal erupted: reassuring top Republican donors that he has taken steps to address allegations of political payback in his home state and that he remains a viable presidential contender for the party's establishment. Christie, who leads the Republican Governors Association, will travel to Florida this weekend for a series of fundraisers to help Republican Gov. Rick Scott.

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