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148 You're not from around here, are you?

BY DAVID KENNARD

dkennard@journalscene

‘Welcome to the Lowcountry.” As a newcomer, you’ll hear that a lot, usually followed by, “You’re not from around here, are you?”



Kennard

As a newcomer myself, I thought I’d let you know what you are in for as you put down roots here.

The Lowcountry. What is it? Generally it’s the geographic area that includes South

Carolina’s coastal communities. Geologically, the “Low Country” is everything below the “fall line,” or the land mass that separates the ancient sandy coastal plain from the upland base rock.

Coloquially, the Lowcountry ends at the most inland point of Dorchester and Berkeley counties. But it just kind of depends on where you are. When you stop seeing “Low Country Boil” on roadside diners you’ll know for sure you’re not in the Lowcountry any more.

Local fare

Boiled Peanuts: Speaking of roadside diners, it won’t be long before you begin to notice the roadside boiled peanut stands. Yes, it’s a thing. Boiled peanuts – also pronounced “boilt” peanuts or “bolt” peanuts – come in a variety of flavors, including traditional salted mush peanut flavored and cajun fire hot mush peanut flavored.

Please try this Lowcountry delicacy, once. Then move on to other much better boiled delicacies such as the aforementioned Lowcountry boil.

The Lowcountry boil really is a local meal to experience. Newcomers will be familiar with the concept of finding a big stew pot and loading it up with everything tasty. A true Lowcountry boil will include new red potatoes, unpeeled shrimp, corn on the cob, smoked sausage, crab meat and maybe crawdads (also known in some social circles as crawfish or crawdaddies). Serve with a side of bolt peanuts – or don’t.

Manners

Regardless of your dining choice, be sure to thank your host in true Southern tradition. Perhaps follow up with a card of

thanks. Manners matter here in the Lowcountry, and regardless of your marital status women should be prepared to be addressed as miss, followed by their first name. My wife found it charming to be called Miss Suesan wherever we went. Menfolk are simply addressed as sir.

Even insults are mannerly. You may remember when earlier this year, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley responded to a Twitter attack by presidential candidate Donald Trump with “Bless your heart.” It was as close to a curse word as you would expect to hear in this genteel country.

Which way?

Newcomers to the Lowcountry also will quickly learn that the points of a compass are relative to the general direction you are headed. There are no straight roads in the Lowcountry, thanks primarily to the rivers, ponds and swamps upon which we have built our communities.

Roads that appear to start out in one direction – northish for instance – may end up going someplace entirely unexpected, and I have found no formula that makes sense of it.

For the most part, however, roads connect to population centers so it’s a safe bet that if you drive in one direction long enough you will end up somewhere.

Don’t feed the wildlife

The local alligator population depends on the lack of route-finding skills of newcomers. And, yes there are alligators here.

I’m not convinced however that gators have figured out directions any better than anyone else, because I continue to hear stories about gators in swimming pools, gators on doorsteps and gators on golf courses. Perhaps that is why I was told that if I encountered one of these monsters, I should flee in a zigzag pattern. Were road planners being chased by alligators?

Hazards ahead

Golf courses abound here in the Lowcountry. You’ll find more about them inside this section. As a newcomer, I found that playing a few courses with people I did not know was an enjoyable way to acclimate to the area.

Because the Lowcountry is built on an ancient coastal plain, sand hazards are everywhere, and the surrounding swampland makes water hazards truly hazardous, mostly because of the alliga-



tor and water moccasin thing.

Don't let that scare you though: I was told by a friend after my last round of golf that the alligators found on golf courses are the only gators you are allowed to pet.

Bless his heart.

David Kennard moved to Summerville

in 2015 to become the executive editor of Summerville Communications, which publishes the Berkeley Independent, Goose Creek Gazette and Summerville Journal Scene. Contact him at dkennard@journalscene.com or 843-873-9424. Follow him on Twitter @david-bkennard.

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File/Mic Smith/Post and Courier

Golfers competing in the 59th Azalea Invitational, Gene Elliott, at left, and Bert Atkinson take a quick look at an alligator by hole No. 2 at the Country Club of Charleston in 2007.



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148 Bathroom bill takes a break

Local bill on transgender students stalls in House

BY BRENDA RINDGE
and GAVIN JACKSON
For the Independent

The Statehouse bill that would return the Berkeley County School District's bathroom gender rule to where it was a month ago stalled Thursday, May 19, at the urging of education and eco-

nomic officials worried about the potential fallout.

"It's amazing the length that some folks went through today to prevent a bill," said Sen. Larry Grooms, R-Charleston, author of the legislation that would require Berkeley students to use the restroom that corresponds with their gender at birth.

The session returned Tuesday, before this paper's publication but after its deadline for print.

Grooms' measure would reverse the district's policy change allowing students to use restrooms with which they identify. But the Senate unexpectedly adjourned just after noon, preventing the bill from heading to the House.

Prominent state officials fear if it passes, it will jeopardize \$870 million in federal education dollars and prospective economic development.

State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman and state Secretary of Commerce Bobby

Hitt were among those who approached lawmakers Thursday seeking a delay.

"This is unprecedented," Grooms said afterward. "I've been here 19 years and that's never happened on a local bill."

Spearman and Hitt met for more than 30 minutes with Grooms and other members of the delegation.

"Neither said they disagreed with the policy," Grooms said. "They were just asking that I delay a vote. They believe that there is still time for the Berkeley County School Board to enact a policy. I disagreed with them and said it was my belief that the school board would have greater motivation to enact a policy if this bill passed."

Because the bill is local legislation, only the Berkeley delegation would vote, with the votes

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weighted based on the number of county constituents that each lawmaker serves.

Two of the five members of the Berkeley senate delegation — Sen. Paul Campbell, R-Goose Creek, who co-authored the bill, and Sen. John Matthews, D-Columbia — were not present, complicating the effort.

Grooms has a larger segment than the two lawmakers who were in attendance. Sen. Sean Bennett, R-Summerville, and Ronnie Sabb, D-Greeleyville. They both voted to adjourn.

“I’m glad they held the bill up because we want to give the local school board a chance to handle this,” Spearman said after it stalled, echoing her earlier statement that the issue should be handled at the local level.

Gov. Nikki Haley’s office released a statement supporting local control of the decision making process in the matter.

“The governor doesn’t want Washington or Columbia to tell the Berkeley County School

Board members what to do,” said Haley press secretary Chaney Adams. “This issue is best decided by local leadership and local standards.”

In April, Berkeley administrators met with the families of transgender students to inform them they could use the restrooms with which they identify. Before that, the students used faculty facilities.

After a closed-door meeting with their lawyer on May 10, the district issued a statement clarifying that because the matter is still unresolved in the courts, Berkeley administrators will manage requests on a case-by-case basis for the rest of this school year.

“They’re basing what they did on unsettled federal law,” Grooms said. His bill, which the district could adopt as policy, merely restores the policy that the district used before April, he said.

Two weeks ago, President Obama issued a directive, citing Title IX, in telling public schools to give transgender students access to all activities and facilities consistent with their gender identity.

Detractors are worried passage of the Berkeley bill could prove

costly to the state. The bill, as written by Grooms, only affects Berkeley County schools for the 2016-17 school year.

“We are setting ourselves up to lose billions in federal funding,” said Sen. Brad Hutto, D-Orangeburg. “It affects the statewide funding of \$870 million in federal funding for schools across the state and, at the very least, buys us a lawsuit that state taxpayers will have to pay for.”

But Grooms said he has heard from neither county officials nor industry leaders.

“Most of the ugly calls I’ve gotten have not been from South Carolina,” he said.

With just six legislative days left in the session, Grooms said he will continue to push the bill when the Senate reconvenes Tuesday.

“I’m disappointed, but this will not deter me from moving forward with a policy that I believe to be in the best interest of the students and citizens of Berkeley County,” he said.

Berkeley School District spokeswoman Katie Orvin said Thursday the district would not make a statement regarding the bill.

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This field of cotton in the Sandy Bay area of Williamsburg County was bush-hogged four months after the historic flood in October. Fields like this one were common across South Carolina.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL DUKE

House overrides Haley's veto of \$40M in aid for SC farmers

(AP) — With dozens of farmers in the lobby and lawmakers cheering every speech, the South Carolina House on Tuesday voted to override Gov. Nikki Haley's veto of a bill offering \$40 million in state aid to farmers who lost their crops in last year's massive floods.

The 112-2 vote in the Republican-dominated House

was a sharp rebuke of a rare veto by their GOP colleague and well beyond the two-thirds needed to send the veto on to the Senate. With a two-thirds vote in that chamber — which passed the bill originally 33-3 — the proposal becomes law. More than a dozen House members spoke Tuesday, thanking farmers for their hard work in tough times.

Haley's veto had stunned the

farmers. Many farmers voted for the governor twice, and they remember her saying more than once after earlier disasters that South Carolina was going to demonstrate that the state had the backs of its farmers. "It broke my heart," Williamsburg County farmer Brian McClam said of Haley's veto. McClam

PLEASE TURN TO **FARMERS, 5**



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Proposal would allow farmers to apply for grants of up to \$100,000 each

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lost \$800,000 in 2015. The first blow came just before the October flood when drought withered his cotton, corn, soybeans, peanuts and peas. Then came 24 1/2 inches of rain in three days.

It took months for the water to finally drain from much of his 3,000 acres. "I cannot understand how a governor who runs a whole state doesn't understand how agriculture drives this state," said McClam, who was just one of about 50 farmers and their families on hand for the vote.

In her veto message Monday, Haley said it wasn't fair for farmers to get help that wasn't available to all small businesses. She said farmers have crop insurance and federal aid to cover their losses. "The governor got poor advice," said republican state Agriculture Secretary Hugh Weathers, who said all of the aid isn't near enough to help

farmers who are on the hook for all the money lost from 2015 crops and for the money needed to get 2016 crops in the ground, all the while looking at lower market prices for what they do grow.

The \$40 million proposal would allow farmers in disaster-declared counties to apply for grants of up to \$100,000 each, covering no more than 20 percent of their total loss. A board will award the grants, and Weathers said if the Senate overrides the veto this week, that board could be picked by the end of the month.

Haley took a more conciliatory tone after Tuesday's vote. "There were no winners during last year's 1,000 year flood, and we will continue doing our best to help all of our industries and property owners — fairly — through the recovery process," she said in a statement. House Ways and Means Chairman Brian White was

stunned the governor picked a fight over \$40 million, saying the state routinely sends that kind of help to out-of-state corporations such as Volvo, which have or are building plants in South Carolina. "The interest payments alone on those bond payments are more than we are talking about to help farmers already in South Carolina," said White, R-Anderson.

The farm bill was a rare second-term veto for Haley, who outside the budget has only rejected two other bills since her re-election in November 2014. And her fellow Republicans weren't shy about saying they were holding her accountable with their vote. "The day after the flood, the governor stood on the steps with her cabinet and said we're going to help every citizen in South Carolina. She didn't help you," said Rep. David Hiott, R-Pickens. "We're here today to honor that commitment to you."



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148 + 280 **Update from the House** **Governor loses veto battle**

The South Carolina House voted to override the Gov. Nikki Haley's veto of \$ 40 million in state aid to farmers that crops were damaged in the historic late fall floods and rain-fall. The House vote was 112-2 in front of over 100 farmers including Neal Baxley and Dupree Atkinson of Marion County. Speaker Jay Lucas (R) Darlington said Gov. Haley intentionally ignored our farmers' plea for help by leaving them out of a request that she made for federal aid for homeowners in the state. By not requesting federal aid, \$ 300 million went to Texas and other states. Because of the governor's refusal to advocate on behalf of our state's largest industry, the General Assembly was forced to take action.

Haley had vetoed the aid package the day before the override calling the money an unprecedented bailout for a vocal industry. She said the same aid was not available to small businesses and homeowners who also suffered from the floods. I voted with the majority. We all know that these historic floods touched about every



Wayne George
Rep.

part of our state with many families and communities suffering devastating losses. We saw lives lost, businesses shut down, infrastructure and roads crumbled, and some homes were destroyed. To date, FEMA has paid 375 million for homeowners through flood insurance claims and assistance. The federal government is sending an additional 157 million later this year. Farmers were excluded from this financial assistance and a main reason for such tremendous House support.

Farmers were among the hardest hit by the storms and rain-fall. They have lost 376 million in crop loss. Crop insurance will only cover about one third. The floods have cost farmers pretty much an entire year of potential income. The Palmetto Farm Aid bill will now become law with an override by the Senate. The

Aid Bill creates a one-time \$ 40 million fund to help those farms hit hardest by the floods. Only those farmers most affected by this disaster are eligible for grants, and the grant can only pay up to 20 percent of what was lost.

In closing, farming and agriculture are such a different business. Farmers have no control on pricing of products and have seen minimal if any price increases in the past several years. Weather is another unpredictable factor as farmers plant their crops with hopes that the weather and growing conditions work out. Agriculture is the largest business in this state with an economic impact of over \$ 40 billion dollars. It is estimated that this industry creates and supports over 200,000 jobs. Our General Assembly has supported new investments such as BMW, Volvo, Michelin, Continental Tire, and many others. Farming is so critical to rural areas like District 57 and I'm pleased our farmers had such tremendous support among my colleagues.



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148 Leatherman says plan for South Carolina's roads will work

BY JOSHUA LLOYD
jlloyd@florencenews.com

FLORENCE — When the state's Senate, House and governor couldn't come to a consensus on a viable road repair bill this year, the likelihood that South Carolinians would see any type of solution to fix the state's notoriously shoddy roads system seemed grim.

Last month a new plan emerged that could give a \$4 billion boost for road projects over the next 10 years.

The state Senate passed, at the behest of Finance Committee Chairman and Senate President Pro-tempore Hugh K. Leatherman Sr., a plan that would give \$2.2 billion from the State Infrastructure Bank upfront for roads.

Leatherman said South Carolina Department of Transportation Secretary Christie Hall told him a one-time shot of \$2.2 billion would free up the

department by near that amount to use on road repairs — meaning about \$4 billion total.

"We're talking about \$4 billion that will be instantaneous, if we can get it together with House and the Senate conference committee," Leatherman said. "I think we will."

The plan prioritizes the replacement of 400 failing bridges across the state, but also includes interstate and rural road fixes. The funding would not cover construction of new roads.

The plan includes a finance-style payback of some \$200 million a year taken from fines and user fees collected by the Department of Motor Vehicles. That figure would be combined with a portion of the state's vehicle purchase sales taxes over a 10-year payback period to the State Infrastructure Bank.

Leatherman said he came up with the plan after realizing that an

increase in the state's gas tax wasn't going to be an option this year. He wanted a "shot in the arm" for the state's roads.

Leatherman said this plan isn't meant to be a long-term fix, but it's something to get started.

"We've got to come back and get a recurring stream of money to fix our roads every year," Leatherman said.

Critics, including Gov. Nikki Haley, have said in the past that Leatherman and the State Infrastructure Bank holds too much power over which roads gets fixed in the state — accusing him using his authority on the bank and the Finance Committee to direct money to Florence County roads.

Leatherman said that despite past criticisms, he gets the feeling that support for this particular plan has been well received in Columbia and he's confident it will pass.

"This is going to work," he said.



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**Do you support Gov. Haley's
decision to veto the S.C. Farm Bill?**

» Yes
» No

VOTE ONLINE: Visit our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/MorningNews or scnow.com to vote. Look for results — and a new question — in this space on Wednesday!

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**The Greenville News,
on South Carolina's infrastructure plan**

As state lawmakers enter the home stretch of this legislative session, they have a very clear mission to pass a comprehensive highway funding bill. Given the options that are on the table, they are likely to take a significant step forward but fall short of the needed long-term funding solution.

Even though the legislature is on the cusp of taking a small step forward, it cannot afford to pass a bill that would likely to face a veto from the governor, who is demanding restructuring of the Department of Transportation. Increased highway funding is now critical, and if the state's roads continue to deteriorate without significant added revenue it could begin to affect economic development and job recruitment.

We have agreed with the governor that DOT reform is an important part of the highway funding equation. It would be unfortunate for the legislature to completely punt this issue to next year over a disagreement over reforms that at worst would not make the DOT any more dysfunctional and in fact could be an improvement over the current system.

The Senate's plan would use funding from the state sales tax on motor vehicles and DOT motor vehicle fees to give money to the state Transportation Infrastructure Bank that would then leverage it to borrow at least \$2.2 billion to be spent on specific projects already underway. That, in turn, would free up additional money to pay for other bridge and paving projects.

All told, the Senate plan would pump about \$3 billion to the state's infrastructure. It's a significant infusion of cash. However, it amounts to two to three years of work when you consider that the state's transportation shortfall has been estimated to be at least \$700 million per year, and perhaps as much as \$1.2 billion per year.

That said, given the late date in Columbia and the prospects that if this effort fails nothing will be done this year, the Senate plan is the more preferable of the two on the table, even if it is debt-heavy.

The House plan would spend about \$400 million on roads through the state budget.

In terms of accountability, both the House and Senate would have the governor appoint highway commissioners and both would have all Transportation Infrastructure Bank projects come to the DOT board for final approval, according to recent reports by Greenville News reporter Tim Smith. However, the House wants the commissioners and the transportation secretary to be subject to a confirmation vote by both the House and the Senate. The Senate maintains that confirmation is its sole responsibility.

It seems a small point that should be easily worked out when House and Senate negotiators discuss the bill. It certainly is trivial enough that it should not be allowed to doom the much-needed funding that would come to the state's roads, bridges and highways that are sorely in need of improvement.

It would be a failure if the legislature did not agree on some measure of infrastructure funding this session. Lawmakers need to pass a bill that will be signed by Gov. Nikki Haley. Including needed DOT reforms is a reasonable way to do this.

Moving forward, the legislature cannot use a \$3 billion one-time infusion of cash as a dodge for not coming back next year and addressing the need for a stable, long-term funding fix. If the legislature does not address the ongoing funding deficit, it will not be long before ongoing infrastructure needs overrun this year's funding measure.

As we have said before, what is needed is a long-term increase in cash that bridges the estimated funding gap. That cash can come from reallocation of some existing revenue, increased funding using available recurring funds in the state budget (some of a \$1.2 billion surplus this year is recurring and could be given to transportation needs), and by increasing the state's gasoline tax and reforming the state's motor vehicle sales tax.

These changes will not likely happen during this election year. But legislators should come back next year, after approving short-term funding, and permanently fix the highway funding deficit that is facing South Carolina.

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148 Group says Scott could boost Trump ticket

BY JAMIE SELF
The State
jself@thestate.com

COLUMBIA — Donald Trump could find a South Carolina fix for his “serious demographic challenge,” pundits say.

Yes, Gov. Nikki Haley, South Carolina’s first Indian-American and first female governor, voluntarily removed herself from the running to be Donald Trump’s running mate after the New York billionaire became the presumptive GOP presidential nominee. (Still, a Rasmussen poll taken about a week after Haley bowed out showed that 9 percent of GOP voters wanted her in the VP spot anyway.) Now, however, another prominent S.C. Republican’s name has come up.

U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, a Republican from North Charleston, would be “one of the few plausible picks,” according to a “Veepstakes” report brought to Rasmussen by the prognosticators from Larry Sabato’s Crystal Ball.

As the first African-Amer-

ican U.S. senator from the South since Reconstruction, Scott could help Trump address his “serious demographic challenge” owing to his awful ratings among nonwhite voters, who could make up 30 percent or so of the electorate in 2016,” the Crystal Ballers from the University of Virginia wrote.

With U.S. Sens. Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio out of the picture, “there aren’t many options to counter this problem for Trump, even to the limited extent that a running mate could address that issue.”

Whether Scott would accept a Trump offer is another question.

Asked late Friday, Scott’s campaign spokesman said the senator is focused only on representing S.C. residents and winning re-election this fall.

But, in February, Scott criticized Trump for not immediately condemning the Ku Klux Klan and David Duke after the white supremacist and former KKK grand wizard endorsed him.

If Scott could overlook

that — and any other follies the once-Rubio enthusiast sees in the presumptive nominee — Trump would be lucky to have Scott as a running mate, said Columbia GOP political consultant Luke Byars, who has done some fundraising work for the senator.

“He’s developed a reputation outside of South Carolina as a bridge builder and a conservative consensus builder,” Byars said. “He’s very well-respected and very well-liked. ... If he were to get asked, I’m sure he would give it serious consideration.”

Byars said he was surprised Scott’s name hasn’t come up sooner, but that’s likely because the senator “doesn’t seek the limelight. He’d be more at home doing charity work back in South Carolina, hanging out with his family.”

Not exactly the style Trump has intoned with his reality-TV and campaign-stump celebrity.

Nevertheless, Scott “would be a great balance for the ticket,” Byars said with “tongue firmly planted in cheek.”



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