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Subject: Monthly Update - November Edition

Attachments: Letter to General Assembly Re Syrian Refugees - 11.16.2015.pdf
RRP Backgrounder.pdf
5002CM16.DOCX

Friends,

January 5, 2016

Save Tuesday, January 5, 2016 from 6:00-7:00pm. I cannot publish all the details yet, but save the date. You will not want to miss!

Pickens County News

- McKissick staff & teachers played each other in volleyball and raised over \$1,000 for the Santa Shop at The Dream Center. Thank you to the leaders in the community participating as cheerleaders.



- AdvancEd is scheduled to conduct a third review of our school board in December. Hopefully, it will provide a pass. If not, our school district will go on monitored status for a year. However, make no mistake about it, the school board continues to be a cause for concern. Following dysfunction at **last month's** meeting, we had more this **month** wherein they couldn't agree on officers.
- Congratulations to City Councilman Thomas Wright for winning re-election to serve Easley for another 4-year term as well as Mayor Bagwell, Councilman Chris Mann, and Councilman Brian Garrison who all ran unopposed.
- Pickens County Council hired a new **county administrator**.
- Over **\$20,000** was raised at the annual Friends of Pickens County Guardian ad Litem Oyster Roast. It was a complete humbling to serve as honorary chair.
- The City of Easley will receive a \$250,000 state grant for the The Doodle Trail. The vision is becoming more and more a reality.
- YMCA Mentor Program has launched. To make a difference in one local child's life, sign up

- [here.](#)

State News

- Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP)
 - The hot topic for this month is RRP. Quiet frankly, the state government has little input/impact into this federal program.
 - Facts to know, however:
 - RRP has been a federal program since 1975. Over 3 million refugees have resettled in the US since 1975.
 - A refugee is a person who is unable to return to a country of origin due to persecution and then participates in RRP. The homegrown terrorists we have had are not refugees. The alleged 4 Syrians caught in Honduras last week were not refugees. Out of the 11 Parisian attackers, to date, one maybe two are Syrian. The rest are homegrown terrorists. None obviously participated in RRP.
 - The vetting process takes 18-24 months. The reason you and I didn't know about RRP until last week is because the vetting process has worked. There hasn't been a terrorist charge against any refugee since 1975. Fort Hood shooter - not a refugee. Boston marathon bombers - not refugees.
 - What will happen if SC does not participate in RRP? SC will lose oversight of the program. Regardless of whether a state participates or a county makes a resolution, RRP can provide grants and contracts to organizations in SC.
 - No state funds are utilized to administer RRP.
 - Only 2 SC programs currently participate in RRP. One in Columbia since 1992. Another in Spartanburg since 2015.
 - Since October 2010, 758 refugees have been located in SC, none as a result of the Syrian crisis.
 - Over 4,000,000 Syrians have fled their war-torn land. President Obama announced US would accept 10,000 or less than 1/3 of 1%.
 - It is more cost effective to create safe zones closer to the war-torn areas.
 - The war with ISIS is a propaganda war. Islamophobic reactions only play into our enemies' propaganda.
 - Attached is Gov. Haley's response. I believe it is a well-reasoned letter from a state government official. Few have actually read her letter, yet I've heard from both extremes on what they think she said.
 - I agree the federal government should review RRP. We are the greatest country in the world. Thankfully, we have the greatest resources to properly vet individuals. Once the process is reviewed, however, we should aim for our American ideals. As the Statute of Liberty reminds, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." We also should support other neighboring countries' efforts and provide safe zones for those fleeing.
 - Confused about what is going on in Syria? This short [video](#) is a good primer.
 - I'm proud of Rep. Mick Mulvaney for doing due diligence and touring Islamville in his York County. Here is an [article](#), but as he stated in a post, "this is not a terrorist camp; these folks are American citizens and some of them are even veterans. And York Co. Sheriff Bryant tells me that he has never had a valid complaint about criminal activity in the community in his almost 20 years as sheriff."
- Starting in 2017, SC will [withhold](#) less from workers' paychecks. (not a tax cut, rather less of interest-free loans to SC).
- Gov. Haley announced Christy Hall as the next Secretary of the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT).

- The BEA has projected this year's general fund budget to have a whopping excess of \$1.2 billion. To put that into perspective, the SC general fund budget is \$7.5 billion. Of course, the SC Flood damage is expected to be in excess of \$1 billion. Agriculture alone has a forecast over \$600 million in damage. My hope with the excess is that (a) the flood damage is addressed, (b) the tax swap we attempted last year can occur allowing a roads bill to pass, and (c) any excess given to the still-recovering agencies (Ed/DSS/DMH/etc).

A Healthier State House

- 2/3 of South Carolinians are overweight. 1/3 are obese.
- What started out as a simple tweet has led to a partnership between the Hospital Association, Institute of Medicine & Public Health, YMCAs, Medical Association, and many other entities. When lawmakers return to session in January, we will start a yet to be named campaign to encourage legislators to become healthier/lose weight.
- This past weekend, I was able to confirm participation from 41 Representatives, 2 Senators, Attorney General Alan Wilson, and Governor Jim Hodges. More to come!

Sponsored Bill to be Pre-Filed (Fargo & Hyco's Law)

- Attached is a bill to be pre-filed in December. In short, it will strengthen laws against injuring/killing a law enforcement and service animal. SC has had two K-9s die in the line of duty (Fargo in 2011 and Hyco last month). Article [here](#).

Personal

- Honored to be appointed to the The Council of State Governments [Legal Task Force](#) ... two things in my wheelhouse - litigation and federalism. The Legal Task Force advises CSG on litigation in federal courts that has the potential to impact the fundamentals of federalism. Each year, the U.S. Supreme Court hears several cases that have a direct impact on states, the rulings of which could dramatically alter the relationship between the federal government and states. The Task Force has a unique opportunity to present a state perspective to the Court via amicus briefs. The Task Force is made up of 12 legislators across the nation.
- I have been appointed the SC House's board member to the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention & Advancement. CERRA'S mission is to provide collaborative leadership in the recruitment, retention, and advancement of outstanding educators for all children in SC. Teacher recruitment and retention is one of the issues within the Abbeville decision. I'm looking forward to learning more and and hopefully moving the ball forward on the issue.

Marco Rubio

As you know, I have endorsed [Senator Marco Rubio for President](#). If you have not had the opportunity to familiarize yourself with Sen. Rubio, I strongly encourage it. Here is a [video](#) of his 2010 improbable run for US Senate.

Local Events

- Dec 1: YMCA night at Groucho's Deli
- Dec 7: Pickens County Council
- Dec 11: Cheer for Children Gala
- Dec 14: Easley City Council
- Jan 5: Event you don't want to miss!

Happy Thanksgiving,

Neal
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