

Title: **For Haley, it's a great pay-to-play day**

Author:

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For Haley, it's a great pay-to-play day

Gov. Nikki Haley is expected to use money for "It's a Great Day SC," a new \$1.5 million leadership PAC, to fight the reelection of Sen. Hugh Leatherman because she thinks he is



blocking the ethics reform bill — which happens to ban leadership PACs. She also might use

some of the money against Rep. Stephen Goldfinch because he did not want to cut the state income tax enough for her rich campaign donors.

Of course, S.C. voters know all about ex-Speaker Bobby Harrell's old leadership PAC, which collected hundreds of thousands of dollars for Harrell and his playmates. As soon as Harrell was thrown out, new

Speaker Jay Lucas put an end to the fun and games. Harrell's hired playmates were kicked out, and the House adopted Rule 4.16, H(3), which bans leadership PACs in the House.

Even before Lucas cleaned the speaker's House, the Senate in 2011 at the request of Common Cause/SC adopted Rule 54, sponsored by Sen. Jake Knotts, which killed off leadership PACs in the upper chamber.

The ethics bill that Haley blames Leatherman for stopping, H.3184, proposes to codify the Senate and House bans on leadership PACs and extend the ban to the executive branch and local officials. If adopted, it would outlaw Great Day SC.

The reason the Senate and House banned leadership PACs and the ethics bill would put that ban in

state law is that they are a brazen abuse of public office, a pay-to-play scheme to entice and coerce special-interest groups to give money to officials' political slush funds to be handed out to cronies and used to attack enemies.

A leadership fund controlled directly or indirectly by a governor or a Senate or House leader exploits that official's power to reward those who donate and punish those who refuse. Leadership PACs can buy candidates and elections and easily extort money and make corrupt payments to control both policy making and policy execution.

Although it is not clear how Haley will collect and spend money, it does not seem that a legislative candidate could ethically accept any money from a Haley leadership PAC because such PACs are banned by Senate and House rules.

If no candidates will risk the accusation of unethical



DAVID GOLDMAN AP

Gov. Nikki Haley

conduct and take Haley's money, her scheme to use it to target her enemies will be a flop.

And if the ethics reform bill passes, it will be a bad day and the last day for Great Day SC.

— John V. Crangle
Executive Director, Common Cause/SC

Title: **Midlands will be better off without Washington and Myers**

Author:

Size: 45.41 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



EDITORIAL

Midlands will be better off without Washington and Myers

GOV. NIKKI HALEY was right to declare Kelvin Washington's seat on Richland County Council vacant after he confessed to not filing state income tax returns for three years.

Relying on an opinion from the attorney general's office, Gov. Haley on Wednesday declared Mr. Washington's District 10 seat vacant because not filing income tax returns is a crime of moral turpitude. Local officials convicted of such a crime forfeit their positions, according to the attorney general's opinion.

We noted two weeks ago that Mr. Washington's credibility was damaged when he pleaded guilty on Feb. 10. That credibility was further eroded when he was accused Feb. 27 of felony DUI. Police say Mr. Washington drove into the back of another car that had slowed on Bluff Road to make a left turn.



Washington

We wish Mr. Washington had resigned after the felony DUI charge. As we noted two weeks ago, his continuing presence on Richland County Council reflected badly on all council members. They did not need that added burden while facing the daunting tasks of helping the county recover from the October floods and



Myers

resolving serious questions raised by the state Department of Revenue about the county's roads program.

Unfortunately, Mr. Washington did not resign. Thanks to Gov. Haley, he's gone from office.

He should not consider an appeal of the governor's order. Her decision was based on a thorough opinion from the attorney general's office that cited the state

constitution, previous attorney general opinions, and a state Supreme Court ruling. The constitution clearly states that any local official convicted of a crime of moral turpitude forfeits the office. The opinions cited by the attorney general's office clearly say that 1) not filing income tax returns is dishonest and 2) dishonesty is a crime of moral turpitude.

Case closed.

The attorney general's office issued its opinion after Gov. Haley inquired about Mr. Washington's legal troubles and those of 11th Circuit Solicitor Donnie Myers.

Mr. Myers was accused of DUI in February after the car he was driving left a Lexington County road and hit a utility pole. State troopers say he failed field sobriety tests and his blood-alcohol level was 0.09 percent.

The attorney general's office said Gov. Haley cannot suspend or remove the solicitor from office because DUI is not a crime of moral turpi-

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tude.

However, Mr. Myers announced on Wednesday that he will not seek re-election in November to another four-year term.

The announcement did not cite his legal problems. Rather, Mr. Myers noted that if he won, state law would force him to retire after he turns 72 next year.

Like Mr. Washington's departure, Mr. Myers' pending departure is good news for our community. But if he is convicted on the DUI charge, it is not enough.

This would be his third alcohol-related conviction

in 11 years. And as we noted in another editorial, calling for him to resign if convicted, it would indicate either that he has a drinking problem or that he believes he is above the law.

The prosecution of criminal cases in Lexington County and the rest of the 11th Circuit is too important to be tainted — even for a few months — by a solicitor who has such a problem or who holds that belief.

If Mr. Myers is acquitted, we can't argue with him serving out his term. But if he is convicted, he needs to follow Mr. Washington out of office.

Title: **S.C. has paid \$40M since 2010 to settle road claims**
 Author: BY JAMIE SELF jself@thestate.com
 Size: 118.42 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



S.C. has paid \$40M since 2010 to settle road claims

Cost of damage due to crumbling roads and bridges on the rise

Potholes made up 70 percent of complaints last year

Drivers, pedestrians have filed more than 11,000 claims since 2010

BY JAMIE SELF
jself@thestate.com

Angela Sindab was driving along Senator Gasque Road in Mullins when her car went off the road, flipping over in a deep drainage canal.

No guardrails or signs warned of the 12-foot drop off at the edge of the road. Suffering life-threatening injuries, Sindab remained trapped her in car, hidden in overgrown vegetation, for three hours before a cyclist, who had stopped to tie his shoe, saw the car and alerted

authorities.

Sindab remembers not being able to move much in the dark. "I just remember hearing the cars and just crying and praying."

After more than \$294,000 in medical bills and a year out of work from the 2011 accident, Sindab won a \$250,000 settlement last year against the S.C. Department of Transportation.

Sindab is not alone. The state has shelled out nearly \$40 million since 2010 to settle road claims

and lawsuits against the Transportation Department.

And those costs are rising.

In the 2005-2006 budget year, the state paid \$4.3 million to settle claims against the Transportation Department. Costs reached \$8.2 million in 2014.

Driven by pothole damages, the number of claims has climbed — averaging 2,600 over the past two years, up from 1,600 a year on

SEE ROAD, 4A

FROM PAGE 1A

ROAD

average during the four preceding years.

S.C. Transportation Secretary Christy Hall said the poor condition of the state's roads are contributing to a rise in costs and claims against the state. "The declining condition of our road network — of the poor pavement conditions that we have going on — and our huge backlog of deferred maintenance is certainly contributing to the growth in that number."

S.C. Chamber of Commerce president Ted Pitts is not surprised by how much the state has paid to settle road claims against DOT.

But it is a poor use of state money, he said. "Ask any taxpayer ... they're going to tell you that's a waste of

taxpayer dollars."

CLAIMS LARGE AND SMALL

More than half of the claims against DOT since 2010 have been for damage caused by potholes.

Pothole-related claims also are on the rise, accounting for roughly 70 percent of claims against DOT — growing to 1,761 in 2015 from 960 in 2010.

Drivers and pedestrians also have sought money from the state for damages caused by a host of other issues, including objects thrown by mowers, painting and resurfacing issues, and drainage and shoulder drop offs.

State law allows drivers or pedestrians who have acci-

dents or are injured on the state's roads and bridges to file claims at the DOT maintenance office in their county.

The Transportation Department has spent \$2.3 million since 2010 settling some of those claims. Larger claims are sent to the S.C. Insurance Reserve Fund, which has spent more than \$37 million since 2010 settling cases against DOT.

Some have been costly.

A man sued the state after his car hit a pothole in Jasper County, causing its tire to burst and his car to

swerve off the road, hitting a tree, said his attorney, Woody Gooding of Alledale. The state paid nearly \$117,400 in losses to the man and legal expenses,

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A motorcyclist sued the state after his bike slid in gravel that had washed over a road from its shoulder, where the small rocks were being used to fill a hole, said his attorney, Jason Turnblad of Florence. The driver won an \$80,000 settlement.

Sindab's attorney, George Jebaily, was shocked to learn three people died in a fiery crash at the same spot of her Mullins accident, but on the other side of the road. In that 2007 accident, a Jeep flipped off the road and caught fire.

Sindab said she knew about that accident. The victims were from her town. But she had no idea they, too, had flipped into the deep drainage canal.

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After the 2007 incident, no guardrails or warning signs were put in place, Jebaily and Sindab said.

"You had three guys that lost their lives and still nothing was done about it,"

Sindab said. "Here I am, with my accident, and, luckily, I'm here to tell it. ... If something would have been done about it in 2007, I could have hit the guard rail and got myself back on the road."

After Sindab's wreck, warning signs were put up. However, there still are no guardrails blocking the 12-foot drop into the drainage canal. Jebaily blames their absence on DOT's financial situation.

"Their answer is money," he said. "That's really the answer to everything."

A DOT official said the site of Sindab's crash is under contract for guardrails, which should be installed by May.

But, Jebaily said, "Had the money been made available to fix our roads, there's every reason to believe" guardrails already would have been installed.

"This is just an example of the carnage that's out there when the the state fails to do what it's supposed to do."

LAWMAKERS WEIGHING ROADS FIX

Lawmakers are debating how best to fix South Carolina's crumbling roads and bridges.

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley backs a Senate plan to spend \$400 million on roads — an amount Transportation Secretary Hall has said would be a welcome start to fixing the state's roads and bridges.

"Any investment in the road network ... would reduce those numbers," said Hall, referring to damages paid by her agency.

The state's roads need work.

Eighty percent of South Carolina's secondary roads and a third of its interstates are in fair or poor condition. Nearly one in five S.C. bridges either is deficient structurally or functionally obsolete, according to DOT.

But critics say an added \$400 million is not nearly enough.

To bring the state's roads and bridges to excellent condition will cost the state an additional \$1.2 billion a year for nearly three decades, DOT says.

The S.C. Chamber of Commerce wants the state to spend at least \$600 million more a year on roads and bridges. That additional amount — spent yearly over a decade — would eliminate structurally deficient and load-restricted bridges while also improving interstate, primary and secondary road surfaces, according to DOT estimates.

According to DOT's estimates, with a one-year injection of \$400 million, "you don't address one single secondary road bridge," said Pitts, the chamber president.

"You don't change that at all."

*Jamie Self: 803-771-8658,
@jamiemself*

Road damage

Claims against the state Transportation Department for damages caused by the state's roads are on the rise:

\$40 million: The amount the state has spent to settle

lawsuits and claims against the Transportation Department since 2010

6,725: Damage claims due to potholes filed from 2010 through 2015

83 percent: Increase in pothole claims last year, compared to 2010

13: Claims in the 2014-2015 budget year settled for between \$100,000 and \$250,000 each in damages, money paid to plaintiffs who sued the state

Need to file a claim?

If you've suffered damage as a result of driving on S.C. roads, you can file a claim with the S.C. Department of Transportation.

Where to file a claim: The S.C. DOT maintenance office in the county where the damage occurred

What to include: A copy of the vehicle's registration (if the damage is to a vehicle) and either a paid repair invoice or two estimates

What to expect: DOT will pay a claim if the agency caused a condition that led to the damage or knew of a defective condition and failed to repair it in a reasonable time before the incident occurred. Claims handled internally take about 12 weeks to process.

SOURCES: S.C. Department of Transportation, S.C. Insurance Reserve Fund

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TIM DOMINICK The (Columbia) State file photo

Deteriorating spots on I-77 in Lexington county are shown in April 2015.

Title: Compromise isn't evil, it's essential**Author:****Size: 8.37 square inch****Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564**



Compromise isn't evil, it's essential

Once again we see Gov. Nikki Haley targeting anyone who does not toe the line on everything she wants ("Who will

pro-Haley group target?" March 6). Nationally I see Ted Cruz having the same mentality.

I probably agree with Cruz most of the time and Haley a good bit as well — her unwavering and ridiculous stance on the gas tax aside. But this is not how government works. I would rather get some of what I want than to guard the right field foul pole and end up with nothing.

It is OK for me to stand on issues without compromise in church. It is ridiculous to operate this way in a democracy. Our government is based on compromise. If we keep electing these hardliners, then we need to resign ourselves to living in a third-world state and country with crumbling infrastructure and nothing getting done.

*- Roger Bazen
Coward*

Title: **The new law that might prevent a full-blown crisis at DJJ**

Author:

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CINDI ROSS SCOPPE
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The new law that might prevent a full-blown crisis at DJJ

FOR MORE THAN a decade, the narrative on the Department of Juvenile Justice was the amazing job that former Family Court Judge Bill Byers did transforming the place into a miracle agency from a deeply troubled prison where kids went to be abused and schooled in how to become grown-up criminals.

Within a year of taking over as director, Judge Byers convinced a federal judge to end an eight-year-old court supervision order. By the time he left in 2011, he had slashed the number of juveniles held in a locked facility from more than 400 to 180, as he diverted them to wilderness and other alternative programs that had much higher success rates; the number has since dropped to around 110.

That narrative remained intact when Gov. Nikki Haley tapped first his protege, and then, early last year, *her* protege to run the agency.

Youth who get sent to lock-up facilities don't tend to be the type whose parents attract a lot of political attention or public sympathy. Combine that with the good impressions about the agency and the difficulty our legislators have keeping up with what's going on inside the agencies that they created, empo-

wered and fund, and it's easy to see how the gathering clouds went unnoticed outside the confines of the prison-like facility on Broad River Road.

WIS had a brief report on a riot in August, but the word "riot" wasn't used; a dorm was "vandalized" during an "altercation." In December, *The State* had a similarly brief report on "three minor fires" at the facility. Even the riot last month that finally brought the matter to a head wasn't portrayed as a big deal: WIS reported that "some kids being held at the Broad River Road Complex in Columbia got out of control Friday" and damaged some property.

I doubt the agency could have kept its problems quiet forever. But if past is prologue, the secret would have come out when there was a crisis — perhaps when a riot ended in dead children on the inside, or an escape ended in a deadly rampage on the outside. Legislators would have been outraged and demanded that heads roll. They would have rewritten laws to make sure such things never happened again.

That, after all, is how we have always handled problems at state agencies: after they turned into crises.

This time we have the opportunity to deal with the problem while it's a tinderbox instead of a conflagration — when there have been only three riots, no loss of life, no escape for more than a few hours, no outside-the-walls violence.

We have this opportunity because of what is, to be sure, a quirk of timing. But that quirk involves a smart new law that was designed for the very purpose of helping legislators spot potential problems in state agencies before they turn into full-blown crises.

That law, passed in conjunction with the 2014 measure that turned control of most central administrative functions of government over to the governor, requires the House and Senate to audit state agencies on a seven-year rotating basis.

In a serendipitous decision, the House Oversight Committee voted in May to include the Department of Juvenile Justice among its first audits. "I don't think anybody could have predicted 10 months ago when we started down this trail that there would be riots at DJJ," said Rep. Kirkman Finlay, who chairs the Juvenile Justice review panel.

Indeed, Mr. Finlay's focus was financial — why did the agency need as many inflation-adjusted

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dollars with 110 kids behind the barbed wire as it did when there were 400? — right up through the hearing his panel held the day before the Feb. 26 riot. The one where sinks were torn from walls and thrown through glass windows, a male inmate broke into the female dorm and others made it to the parking lot, where they destroyed police cars and other property.

Even though the Oversight Committee had urged state employees to contact it about problems at the agency, Mr. Finlay told me that it was only after the riot that he was inundated with calls from Juvenile Justice employees.

“The story has been the same: favoritism, they’re afraid of retaliation, they don’t feel safe, the guards feel threatened, and management doesn’t seem to be in touch,” he said.

At a hearing earlier this month where Director Sylvia Murray testified that the agency hasn’t had a gang intervention specialist in a year, the police chief’s job has been open for almost three years and the rapid-response team has been disbanded, a guard told the panel that gangs have taken over and the unarmed guards can’t put prisoners in lockdown without permission of a supervisor, even if there isn’t one on the campus.

Mr. Finlay made the point of directing his staff to check on the guard periodically, to make sure she doesn’t suffer any retaliation. It was a crucial directive, because the only way the Legislature will get the cooperation it needs to understand what is going on inside of troubled agencies is by making sure employees won’t be punished for talking. And without cooperation from state employees and attention from state legislators, we’ll never stop hurtling from crisis to crisis.

Ms. Scoppe can be reached at cscoppe@thestate.com or at (803) 771-8571.

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EXCLUSIVE: SC'S CRUMBLING ROADS

Road claims cost state \$40 million since 2010

Drivers collect for vehicle damage, medical costs

Payouts rising due to poor condition of roads, bridges

Potholes made up 70 percent of complaints last year

Drivers, pedestrians filed more than 11,000 claims since 2010

BY JAMIE SELF
 jself@thestate.com

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before a cyclist, who had stopped to tie his shoe, saw the car and alerted authorities.

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Sindab is not alone. The state has shelled out nearly \$40 million since 2010 to settle road claims and lawsuits against the Transportation Department.

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SEE ROADS, 7A

ROADS FROM PAGE 1A

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S.C. Transportation Secretary Christy Hall said the poor condition of the state's roads are contributing to a rise in costs and claims against the state.

"The declining condition of our road network – of the poor pavement conditions that we have going on – and our huge backlog of deferred maintenance is certainly contributing to the growth in that number."

S.C. Chamber of Commerce president Ted Pitts is not surprised by how much the state has paid to settle road claims against DOT.

But it is a poor use of state money, he said. "Ask any taxpayer ... they're going to tell you that's a waste of taxpayer dollars."

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Pothole-related claims also are on the rise, accounting for roughly 70 percent of claims against DOT – growing to 1,761 in 2015 from 960 in 2010.

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"Their answer is money," he said. "That's really the answer to everything."

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LAWMAKERS WEIGHING REMEDIES FOR ROADS

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SOURCE: S.C. Department of Transportation

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SOURCES: S.C. Department of
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TIM DOMINICK tdominick@thestate.com

Deteriorating patches of roadway on I-77 in Lexington County (2015)

Title: **McGill switching to the GOP, planning 2018 run for governor**
 Author: BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
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EXCLUSIVE

McGill switching to the GOP, planning 2018 run for governor

BY ANDREW SHAIN
 ashain@thestate.com

Former Democratic Lt. Gov. Yancey McGill told The State on Monday that he plans to run for governor in 2018 as a Republican.

McGill, the last Democrat to hold statewide office, said he switched parties last week after years of leaning toward pro-Republican stances on government spending and regulation as well as abortion.

"I have backed a lot of conservative issues over the years, and people have asked me why not consider joining the (Republican)

party," said McGill, who spent 25 years at the State House, representing a heavily Democratic district in Williamsburg and Georgetown counties.

Asked why he remained a Democrat, the real estate broker and homebuilder said, "I couldn't join the Republican Party because I lived in a Democratic district. Now, that I'm not in office in a Democratic district, I could join."

McGill's switch to the GOP is the most significant since then-state Sen. Verne Smith of

Greenville helped Republicans win a majority in the Senate in 2001, state GOP chairman Matt Moore said.

Democratic leaders in his district were not surprised McGill switched parties after years of voting with Republicans, S.C. Democratic chairman Jaime Harrison said.

"If he thinks that switching parties for a statewide run as a Republican will succeed, he needs to know that voters will

SEE MCGILL, 7A

One-time S.C. senator spent 25 years at State House as a Democrat

Says he remained with the party because he lived in a Democratic district

Makes the switch after years of backing GOP stances on spending, abortion

FROM PAGE 3A

MCGILL

see through that," Harrison said. "They have plenty of real Republicans to vote for. And it's not like Democrats are going to support him now."

McGill, 63, said he never heard complaints about his voting record. McGill's history of bipartisanship was a reason that few Republicans objected to him becoming lieutenant governor in 2014 after Glenn McConnell, a Republican, stepped down to become president of the

College of Charleston.

"I was a state senator, not based on party, but based on representing all the citizens of South Carolina," McGill said.

McGill did not run for the lieutenant governor in 2014, a race won by Republican Henry McMaster.

After assuming office last year, McMaster hired McGill as the state director of the S.C. Office on Aging — a post within the lieutenant governor's

office that paid \$122,000 a year. McGill stayed in the job eight months before returning home to Kingstree to work on his small family farm.

"We do need some new leadership in the state," McGill said. "If I'm governor, I would fix the potholes and repair the roads without new taxes."

Republican Gov. Nikki Haley cannot run again under state law after winning re-election to a second term in 2014.

The 2018 governor's race is expected to draw many Republican candidates in the heavily GOP state. House Speaker Pro Tempore Tommy Pope, R-York, is the only other publicly to say he plans to run for governor.

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Title: **McGill switching to the GOP, planning 2018 run for governor**
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FILE PHOTOGRAPH TIM DOMINICK tdominick@thestate.com

Then-S.C. President Pro Tempore Yancey McGill is sworn in as lieutenant governor by S.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice Jean Toal in 2014 while his wife, Pamela, and Gov. Nikki Haley watch.

Title: **Next court hearing set for June 30 on Washington's DUI charge**
 Author:
 Size: 9.76 square inch
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Next court hearing set for June 30 on Washington's DUI charge

Former Richland County Councilman Kelvin Washington's court date for his felony drunken driving charge has been pushed back three months.

The 5th Circuit Solicitor's Office excused Washington's first appearance Monday and set his second appearance for June 30, his attorney Mike Duncan said.

Duncan said first appearances are used for scheduling purposes, so it's normal for prosecutors to excuse it when a defendant already has an at-



Washington

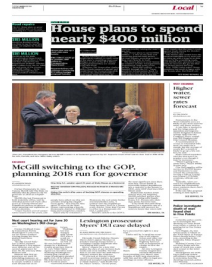
He was indicted on that charge by a Richland County grand jury March 16. Gov. Nikki Haley signed an executive order declaring Washington's council post vacant because Washington pleaded guilty Feb. 10 to failure to file state income tax returns for three years.

— GLEN LUKE FLANAGAN

torney.

Washington was charged with felony DUI after a crash on Bluff Road on Feb. 27.

Title: **House plans to spend nearly \$400 million**
 Author: BY CASSIE COPE ccope@thestate.com
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ROAD REPAIRS

House plans to spend nearly \$400 million

House plan sets up a clash with state Senate

\$185 million would go to counties, \$181 million to Transportation Department

Representatives will continue considering \$7.5 billion budget proposal Tuesday

BY CASSIE COPE

ccope@thestate.com

House members plan to spend nearly \$400 million to repair some of the state's crumbling roads and bridges as part of the \$7.5 billion budget proposal they are considering this week.

However, the House plan clashes with a Senate-passed proposal and would force the General Assembly to revisit the almost \$30 billion road-repair issue next year, in-

cluding possibly raising the state's gas tax.

The House plans to spend \$366 million — a mix of one-time and recurring general-fund money — on road repairs, according to state Rep. Gary Simrill, R-York.

The House plans to send money to counties and the Transportation Department, with some of the money — likely \$50 million — to be

bonded through the S.C. Transportation Infrastructure Bank. In addition to new money for roads, \$49 million would go to pay for

flood repairs that the state's roads agency made during the October storm, Simrill said.

The House plan would force the General Assembly to try next year to come up with a long-term solution to fix the crumbling roads, said Simrill, who sponsored a proposal to increase the gas tax that the House passed last year.

Gov. Nikki Haley urged House members last week to agree with the Senate plan. But Simrill crit-

\$366 million more to fix some crumbling S.C. roads and bridges.

\$185 MILLION

would be divided among counties to pay to resurface roads not eligible for federal money

\$181 MILLION

would go to the state Transportation Department, including \$100 million in fines and fees collected by the Department of Motor vehicles, \$65.7 million from the car sales tax and some of the money — likely \$50 million — to be bonded through the S.C. Transportation Infrastructure Bank

SEE ROAD REPAIRS, 6A

Road repairs

The S.C. House plans to spend

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ROAD REPAIRS

icized the Senate proposal for spending money through state law – not as part of the formal budget process.

The House plans to divide \$185 million among counties, using a formula that takes into account a county's size, population and miles of rural roads. Counties would be required to spend the money to resurface roads that are not eligible for federal money.

House members Monday approved transferring \$100 million collected in

finances and fees from the Department of Motor Vehicles to the S.C. Department of Transportation. Members intend to pay to operate Motor Vehicles through the general-fund budget, instead of the agency raising its own money.

Simrill said he anticipates the House adopting changes to the structure of the Transportation Department and Infrastructure bank, similar to the Senate proposal.

The Senate plan would

enable the governor to appoint Transportation Department commissioners who would select a secretary to lead that agency. The Transportation Department would also approve Infrastructure Bank projects, criticized as pork-barrel politics.

After considering the budget this week, House members will take an unpaid break for two weeks, returning to consider the Senate-passed road-repair proposal.

There is no urgency to

take up the Senate plan sooner, Simrill said, noting the state budget does not take effect until July 1. He added lawmakers are awaiting a Legislative Audit Council report on Transportation Department operations so they can incorporate any changes suggested in that review.

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Title: **A new group of carpetbaggers, a familiar MO**

Author:

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CINDI ROSS SCOPPE
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
THE STATE

A new group of carpetbaggers, a familiar MO

IN HER FIRST Senate race, Katrina Shealy got more than half of her campaign donations from Howie Rich, the New York multimillionaire who spent several years trying to buy himself a nice little Southern Legislature. In her follow-up race, she was bankrolled by the out-of-state donors to Gov. Nikki Haley's unlimited-donations Movement Fund.

Now she tells reporter Cassie Cope that the anti-gas-tax campaign by Americans for Prosperity is dangerous because "We can't let some out-of-state special-interest group come into South Carolina and dictate how we do business."

I don't mean to pick on Sen. Shealy, who is absolutely right and hardly alone. Sen. Larry Grooms got some Rich money in 2012 and now says that having a couple of billionaires underwriting campaign efforts "limits the ability of having free and open speech." I suspect that if we talked to more Republican senators we could find similar revelations.

This new-found concern about deep-pocketed special interests helps explain why we keep having this problem with carpetbaggers trying to impose their will on our state: Legislators look the other way when outside interests support *them*. They only recog-

nize the danger when they become the targets — as they all eventually will.

Think of it as our lawmakers' version of Martin Niemöller's poem: First they came for the moderate Republicans, and I did not speak out, because I was a conservative. Then they came for the conservatives, and I did not speak out, because I was a libertarian.

The first major-money special interests who tried to buy our Legislature were actually our own home-grown video poker barons, who targeted anyone who tried to make them obey our laws. Too many Democrats agreed with them and fought GOP attempts to make people tell us when they were trying to influence our votes, but the Legislature managed to require that anyway. That was back when using campaign disclosure to make it more difficult for special interests to buy legislators was conservative orthodoxy — before the libertarians and anarchists started asserting themselves.

But then we elected a libertarian governor, and Mark Sanford's out-of-state fellow-travelers started flooding in, either ignoring our law or finding ways around it. Eventually they began melting one into another, this secession of anonymous carpet-

bagger who back their dump trucks full of cash up to our elections to buy their vision of a lawless society with a government shrunk small enough to drown in a bathtub.

First came the Michigan-based "All Children Matter," which tried to disguise its anti-schools motives by attacking legislators' refusal to sign a blood oath to a creepy Washington puppetmaster, swearing to never ever raise a tax so help me God.

When people caught on to where that group was from and what it was all about, the ironically named "South Carolinians for Responsible Government" took over and acknowledged its defund-the-schools agenda. Then, right in the middle of the 2006 primary campaign, the name "Conservatives in Action" suddenly replaced SCRG's name on attack pieces — after the State Ethics Commission told SCRG to start obeying the state law that required it to report how it spent money trying to warp our votes. Eventually the courts started going crazy, decided our law was too broad and struck it down.

Next came Howie Rich, who used his network of limited liability corporations to bypass spending limits with his attack on universal public education, the lifeblood of our democracy.

And now there's Americans

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for Prosperity, the flagship organization of the political network overseen by industrialist billionaires Charles G. and David H. Koch. Rather than pretending to provide “choices” for students, AFP is all about shrinking government and taxes.

That’s a popular enough idea that you’d think it could afford to be honest, and to go after actual tax increases. Of course, you’d then wonder why it would target a state where the Legislature cuts taxes a little every year, and a lot lots of years. The group’s robocalls targeting senators who supported raising gas taxes while cutting income taxes left off the “cutting income tax-

es” part. They warned of a “72 percent” gas tax hike (12 cents per gallon) in a way that made it sound like a “72-cent gas tax hike.”

It was an open secret during the roads debate that Republican senators were terrified that voting for the gas-tax increase — even an increase that was offset by an income-tax cut — would bring the trucks full of AFP money into their districts to defeat them.

We’ll keep being plagued by these carpetbaggers until we take back our political system. That means insisting the Legislature pass that Republican orthodoxy law requiring them to tell us when they spend money to

distort our elections. And it means refusing to let the libertarians and anarchists control our elections.

The way to do that, if you’re one of the 65 percent to 85 percent of S.C. voters who boycott the polls until November, is to vote in the June state Republican primary (no one is bothering to try to buy the Democrats). And vote for the Republicans who actually care about South Carolina instead of fulfilling the fantasies of their out-of-state sugar daddies.

Ms. Scoppe can be reached at cscoppe@thestate.com or at (803) 771-8571.

“
LEGISLATORS ONLY
RECOGNIZE THE
DANGER WHEN THEY
BECOME THE TARGET
— AS THEY ALL
EVENTUALLY WILL.

