

Title: **Pre-Release Center plans to close in early June**  
 Author: BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND [ccleveland@aikenstandard.com](mailto:ccleveland@aikenstandard.com)  
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# Pre-Release Center plans to close in early June

BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND  
[ccleveland@aikenstandard.com](mailto:ccleveland@aikenstandard.com)

The closing of the Lower Savannah Pre-Release Center in Aiken could be costly for Aiken County, according to officials with the County, City of Aiken and City of North Augusta.

The South Carolina Department of Corrections announced Friday plans to close the Wire Road facility in early June.

Aiken County Administrator Clay Killian, Aiken Assistant City Manager Stuart Bedenbaugh and North Augusta City Manager Todd Glover said they were all hand-delivered a memo regarding its closing Friday morning. The three said it was the first time they

learned the facility would close.

"As soon as (we) got the letter, we were shocked," Glover said.

The Level-1A minimum security facility houses inmates who have served the majority of their sentence and have the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community through work release programs, according to a news release sent by SCDC.

The institutional staff, made up of 29 officers and 10 non-uniformed employees, will relocate primarily to Trenton Correctional Institution to "provide more resources in critical areas and create a more desirable officer to inmate ratio, ensuring institutional safety," the

release states.

Lower Savannah residents will be relocated to similar institutions around the state to ensure offenders are able to continue their work in release programs and prepare to re-enter society, it states.

Killian said the County budgets around \$75,000 a year to pay 15 to 20 inmates a day to work, performing janitorial services of animal control, litter pickup for solid waste and maintenance for county vehicles.

The City of North Augusta relies heavily on the labor for its materials

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## CENTER

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recovery facility, which is used for recycling, Glover said. North Augusta can have upward of 15 inmates performing a variety of work, typically in solid waste, he said.

All inmates are paid \$15 a day for the services, making it difficult to hire the same amount of bodies at the current minimum wage to replace the ones they're losing.

"If we had to hire the same amount of bodies to replace the ones we're losing - we pay \$15 a day per inmate - at our current minimum wage, that's two hours of work for some other employee," he said.

SCDC's news release states the "closing of Lower Savannah Pre-Release Center is not expected to have any impact on the agency's ability to provide work or pre-release programming for inmates or the ability to maintain the de-

partment's labor crew commitments."

According to the release, recidivism rates have declined steadily based on a three-year national standard. The percentage of released inmates who returned to SCDC in 2012 is 24.9 percent, down from 2011 at 25.7 percent and 2010 at 27.5 percent, it states.

The statement said under Gov. Nikki Haley, the prison population has declined by 2 to 3 percent each year since 2011, and the current average daily inmate population is 20,550, down from 21,183 in 2015.

"Allocating resources to fewer institutions allows us to reinvest tax dollars in security and offer more programs and services to offenders, making our prisons safer and ensuring returning citizens are better prepared for re-entry," said Bryan P. Stirling, director of the South Carolina Department of Corrections.

The Lower Savannah Pre-Release Center opened in 1973 with an operat-

ing capacity of 250 inmates but currently houses 155, according to the Department of Corrections news release.

"South Carolina has seen a decline in minimum security populations due to the passing of the Omnibus Crime Bill in 2010 and successful programs and services, such as Intensive Supervision Services for the Youthful Offender population," it said.

The state has a total of six 1A facilities, male and female, according to SCDC spokesperson Stephanie Givens.

Givens said the state doesn't have any plans, to SDC's knowledge, about any other closings.

Killian said one of the closest 1A facilities to Aiken is in Columbia and transportation would not balance the cost of using those inmates and noted having inmates in Aiken is beneficial.

"The state is saving a lot of money, but it's going to cost the locals not having them. ... It's a big benefit to have them in the community," Killian said.

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“Everybody wants less government until it hurts them.”

Bedenbaugh said the City of Aiken utilizes around 32 inmates a day to assist with solid waste collection and some of the maintenance of the parkways and grounds. He estimates it could have an impact of a couple hundred thousand dollars a year for the

City.

The County and North Augusta could not provide estimates as of Friday. The inmates will be moved by May 27.

Officials with the county and affected municipalities said they are reaching out to appropriate delegation members and SCDC.

Givens said the Department of Cor-

rections leases the property from Aiken County and “may have potential cost savings in the areas of reduced maintenance and utility costs associated with operating an older institution.”

**Christina Cleveland** is the county government reporter at the *Aiken Standard*. Follow her on Twitter @ChristinaNCleve.



STAFF PHOTO BY CINDY KUBOVIC

**The Lower Savannah Pre-Release Center in Aiken announced plans Friday to close the facility in early June.**

Title: **House approves \$200M annually for K-12 schools**  
 Author: by seANNA AdcoX Associated Press  
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# House approves \$200M annually for K-12 schools

BY SEANNA ADCOX

*Associated Press*

COLUMBIA — South Carolina could borrow up to \$200 million annually to repair and replace deteriorating K-12 public schools statewide, under legislation approved Tuesday by the House.

The measure, advanced by a 98-5 vote, is meant to partly address the state Supreme Court's ruling in November 2014 that the Legislature must do more to provide educational opportunities in poor, rural school districts. Lawmakers face a June deadline to present justices with their plan for fixing South Carolina's broken education system.

Another perfunctory vote, expected Wednesday, would send the bill to the Senate. If it is enacted, borrowing would be at least a year away.

The bill first requires a statewide evaluation of districts' infrastructure needs, funded by \$1.5 million in legislators' 2016-17 budget proposals. Legislators would then receive a priority list of projects approved by the State Board of Education, to be updated yearly.

State Superintendent Molly

Spearman said the initial focus will be on districts that initially sued the state in 1993 over equitable funding.

"We owe it to them to begin there," she said Tuesday. "So many areas have no means of raising additional revenue for capital projects other than on the backs of the same few businesses that might be there."

Spearman said the bill could also help areas of "extreme growth" keep up with student population. It could also improve efficiencies by building facilities, such as vocational centers, that serve multiple districts, she said.

The bill allows for money to be awarded to districts as either grants or loans, depending on the project's size and/or ability to pay.

Rep. Leola Robinson-Simpson, D-Greenville, questioned whether the borrowing amount "is at all adequate."

"What impact would be made with that amount and how long would it take to really improve our schools?" she asked.

Such questions are unanswerable until the evalua-

tion's completed, said House Ways and Means Chairman Brian White, R-Anderson. He said the proposal offers a way to help districts while being accountable to taxpayers.

"Without this, it won't get any better," he said. "This is a plan that's sustainable."

Gov. Nikki Haley presented the \$200 million idea in January, saying she can't ignore the leaky roofs, moldy walls and other unsafe conditions in schools she visits. Education includes improving the buildings where students spend most of their day, she said, pointing to blown-up

photos of decrepit conditions.

"We cannot continue to ignore that in much of our state, we have a facilities problem," she said in her State of the State address a week later.

"Children can't learn as well when the walls of their classrooms are crumbling around them. Teachers can't teach as well when the hallways they walk are littered with puddles. Our students and our teachers deserve no less than to go to school each day in a place that is safe and clean."

Title: **Haley heads to D.C. to discuss Guantánamo**  
 Author: by meG KiNNArD Associated Press  
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# Haley heads to D.C. to discuss Guantánamo

**BY MEG KINNARD**  
*Associated Press*

COLUMBIA — Gov. Nikki Haley is going to Washington, D.C., later this week to voice her concerns over the possible transfer of Guantánamo detainees to sites including South Carolina.

The governor will be among those testifying Thursday before the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee, according to Haley's office. The panel discussion is focused on implications for state and local communities if the Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, prison is closed.

Testimony also is expected from representatives from the Major County Sheriff's Association and the Center for American Progress, as well as Leavenworth, Kansas, County Attorney Todd Thompson, according to the committee's website.

Haley, a second-term Republican, has been out-

spoken in her opposition to the transfer of remaining detainees. A Naval brig 15 miles from Charleston is among possible transfer sites already surveyed by a Defense Department team, as well as locations in Colorado and Kansas.



**Haley**

any illegal and ill-advised action by this Administration, especially when that action relates to importing terrorists into our states," and threatened to sue if necessary.

Before that, Brownback exclusively told The Associated Press that Guantánamo should continue to hold suspected terrorists indefi-

Last year, Haley and Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback wrote to Defense Secretary Ash Carter that they would not "be part of

nately because the U.S. is in a war with terrorism "for some time to come." Like the attorneys general, he said moving prisoners from Guantánamo will compromise the nation's security and harm its troops.

Dozens of sheriffs in Colorado have also written the administration, saying detainee movement would endanger citizens. In November, attorneys general from Colorado, Kansas and South Carolina implored the Obama administration not to send detainees their way, saying such action "will create imminent danger" and make "targets" out of the communities where they are placed.

Legislation introduced Monday on Capitol Hill would maintain a ban on transferring prisoners from Guantánamo to the United States. The longstanding congressional prohibition has kept President Barack Obama from fulfilling a campaign pledge to close the facility.

Title: **Haley highlights efforts to help former prisoners find employment**  
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## Haley highlights efforts to help former prisoners find employment

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Gov. Nikki Haley told prisoners Monday a better life beyond the barbed-wire fencing starts with a legal job, and it's her job to help them find one.

"Every one of you deserves better. I don't know what got you in here, but I know you deserve not to come back," she told about 90 inmates at Manning Correctional Institution in Columbia, a pre-release center for men within six months of being released. "I want you to have a job so you've got something that makes you feel productive and worthy of living a good life."

Haley was visiting the state Department of Employment and Workforce's "work ready initiative" at Manning.

About 450 former inmates have completed the program since its launch in November 2014. According to the agency, 98 report they're currently employed. Exact numbers and where they work are unknown. But the agency plans to cross-match wage records to better track the program's results.

The program is intended to be the link between training for a job and actually landing

one.

Inmates at Manning were already learning construction

trades such as brick masonry and carpentry. The initiative added the teaching of computer, interview and "life"

skills — such as proper attire and how to explain their incarceration. Inmates also craft a resume and apply for jobs online. Some inmates have been in prison so long, they don't know how to work a computer, said Department of Corrections Director Bryan Stirling.

"Before, they would still have job training, but we would basically give them a bus ticket and drop them off at the bus station and have them fend for themselves," he said.

Only inmates imprisoned for non-violent offenses qualify for the program. Other criteria include having a discipline-free record and a GED or high-school diploma. Nearly 470 are currently enrolled.



**NIKKI  
HALEY**



Title: **Davis joins sheriffs statewide in signing domestic violence pledge**  
 Author: By DAMIAN DOMINGUEZ ddominguez@indexjournal.com  
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# Davis joins sheriffs statewide in signing domestic violence pledge

By **DAMIAN DOMINGUEZ**

ddominguez@indexjournal.com

Lakelands sheriffs have joined with others from across the state to address domestic violence.

Sheriff Tony Davis added his name to the list of 46 on April 14, pledging to work with the state in adopting uniform policies and procedures on how to handle domestic violence cases.

Gov. Nikki Haley's Domestic Violence Task Force has laid the groundwork for sheriff's offices to make changes over three years to better handle domestic violence. In the first year's

initiatives, sheriff's offices have pledged to adopt formal policies to file incident reports on every call, have supervisory oversight on the reports and provide officers with reference guides to help them navigate the intricacies of domestic violence laws, among other things.

"We're already doing it, though," Davis said. "Any time you go out to a call like that, so many things can be different, but our guys do everything required under law."

Though South Carolina has ranked among the top states for number

of domestic violence cases, he said law enforcement has begun taking it more seriously after last year's reforms to domestic violence laws. Though attempts to standardize how law enforcement handles these cases on paper, he said when an officer is on the scene there are many factors that need to be assessed and prioritized.

"Each call is different," he said. "You may be dealing with the same people, but in different circumstances. We photograph, we document, we write up every report establishing probably cause."

At a scene, an officer might have to separate the people involved, diffuse the situation, check up on any children present, document injuries and get

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## PLEDGE

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statements from everyone, all feel it," he said. "How many while taking note on as many times, or how many days or relevant details as possible, he months do I think about that said. The situations can often stuff? It sticks with you." be stressful, and are rarely ever forgettable, he said.

"We're human too, and we

*Contact Damian Dominguez at 864-634-7548 or follow on Twitter @IJDDOMINGUEZ.*



**TONY  
DAVIS**

Title: **South Carolina ,eqis ative Update**  
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# South Carolina Legislative Update

By SC Rep. Bill Taylor,  
R-District 86

## Dear Friends:

During the debate over fixing South Carolina's roads, I've heard repeatedly from constituents they want SCDOT reformed before millions of additional dollars are sent to that agency. This month the House of Representatives took decisive action to create real reform.

## Too much political drama

It wasn't easy. Gov. Nikki Haley insisted we rubber stamp the Senate's plan. Before our debate, she took to social media and bashed the House for planning to amend the Senate proposal, which she called "real, good reform." She went further to accuse House members of trying to kill reform.

My response is simple: "That's pure baloney!"

House Speaker Jay Lucas put it this way: "The real shame is that Gov. Haley has chosen to put politics over policy and mislead the people of South Carolina. Sadly, instead of working with us to initiate real and meaningful reforms to fix our roads, Gov. Haley focuses on stopping progress with baseless political attacks."

The House last year passed a plan to increase the state's gas tax by the equivalent of 10 cents a gallon. (I opposed that because SCDOT needs reforming before we commit you to pay more at the pump.) The Senate waited nearly a year and changed the House plan last month, killing a gas tax increase. Instead, the Senate proposed spending \$400 million a year from the state's general fund budget on roads. That's the money that pays for public education and all other government services.

Rep. Gary Simrill, who sponsored the gas tax proposal, said the Senate plan failed to

adequately provide for road repair: "It is folly to make a promise to the people of South Carolina that roads will be fixed without a reliable, steady funding stream," he said. "The governor is now echoing these promises that she knows cannot be kept. That is the real shame."

## House passes final amendment

The House had delayed action on the Senate amendments for several weeks until it received the findings of the Legislative Audit Council report which exposed insufficiencies within SCDOT. That year-long investigation provided keen, independent insights into the operations of SCDOT that are invaluable in retooling that agency to meet the current road crisis and create an agency citizens can have confidence in for years to come. With those new revelations in front of us, the House could not in good faith pass the Senate amendment because it fell short of true reform.

With much debate, the House amended the Senate version of the roads bill by an overwhelming vote of 113-6. The legislative process exists so that the General Assembly can work together to move South Carolina forward, not provide opportunities for political grandstanding.

Provisions in the House amendment to H.3579 include

- Highway Commissioners are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the General Assembly.

- Commission appoints a Secretary of Transportation with advice and consent of the General Assembly, who then serves at the pleasure of the Commission to create a single line of authority from the Governor, to the Commission, to the Secretary.

- Eliminates the Joint Transportation Review Committee, but retains the required

qualifications for Commissioners to ensure appointees have appropriate education and experience. These qualifications and requirements were removed in the Senate amendment.

- Adopts the State Infrastructure Bank language in the Senate version and requires the entity to follow SCDOT prioritization criteria for projects.

- Removes the irresponsible \$400 million general fund mandate because it is unreliable. This year's House passed budget appropriated \$415 million additional funds to SCDOT, an amount larger than specified in the Senate amendment, and we will continue to give

available funds to SCDOT in the future.

- Addresses the Legislative Audit Council's concerns expressed in the report by placing the SCDOT Chief Internal Auditor under the independent State Auditor.

## The reaction

The House vote brought much wailing by the governor and many senators who wanted the House to rubber stamp the senate plan, claiming our amendment "killed" reform. I guess in politics some prefer to duck responsibility and blame someone else. However, it didn't take long for objective observers of the legislature to see it the same way I do.

The *Times & Democrat* headline stated: "House had a right to cry foul on roads plan." In part, they wrote:

"The S.C. House should stand its ground in the debate over road repairs, even though the governor and Senate leaders are saying representatives' 113-6 vote to alter the plan sent to them by the upper chamber spells the death of the legislation for another year.

"The Senate plan uses money that many lawmakers had stated would be used for other priorities, including education and local government. The funding level approved

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by the Senate may or may not be available in coming years, depending upon economic conditions.

“Handing control of the SCDOT to the governor, with approval by the Senate of commissioners, takes away any House role in agency governance.”

Cindy Ross Scoppe’s commentary in *The State* newspaper read, in part:

“Gov. Nikki Haley has been warning for weeks that the House would kill what once was a road-funding bill if it did anything other than swallow the Senate’s deeply flawed plan whole. And when House leaders unveiled their plan on Tuesday, she ran to her Facebook page to announce the death.

“It left me with a very different conclusion: The House gave itself some negotiating tools, to increase the chance that the Legislature will be able to reach a compromise that finally enacts the smart reforms to the Transportation Department that the Legislative Audit Council just reminded us we so desperately need.

“...Anyone who actually wants to see the Transportation Department finally reformed ought to be ecstatic.”

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