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**SOUTHERN 500**

# Flag exchange offered to fans

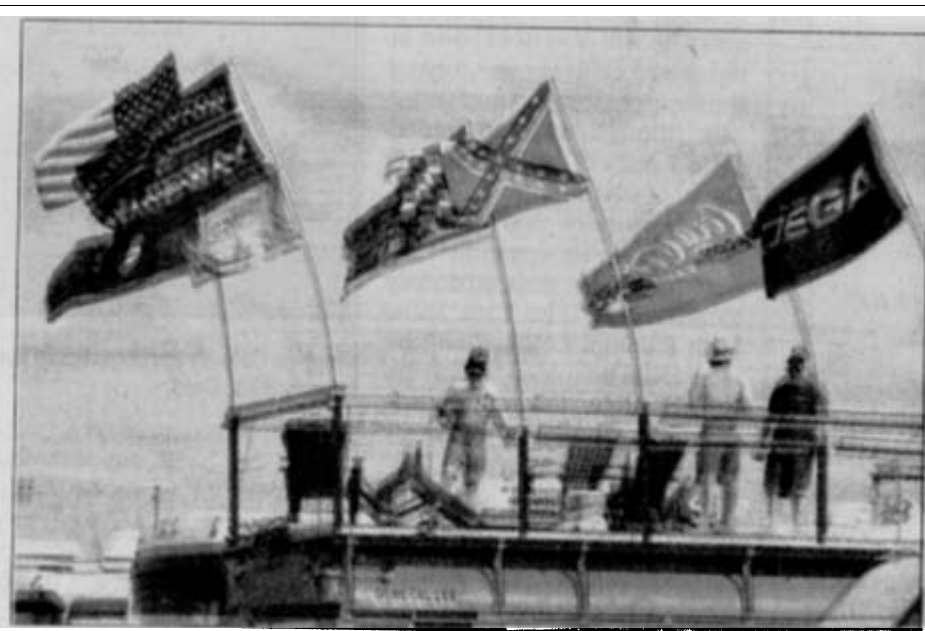
**BY GAVIN JACKSON**  
Morning News  
gjackson@florencenews.com

**DARLINGTON** — As drivers get set to race in cars bearing vintage designs in a tribute to the Southern 500 race returning to NASCAR's oldest track this weekend, there's one symbol executives would like to keep in the past—the Confederate flag.

Even with changes to the Southern-rooted sport over generations of racing, Confederate flags can still be seen flying near vendors' tents, from campers, buses and trucks in and around the infield by fans whose loyalties run deep.

In a statement, Darlington Raceway President Chip Wile called for the creation of an "inclusive

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MORNING NEWS/FILE

**Despite the recent events in the state this summer involving the Confederate flag and calls from the racing organizations to refrain from flying the flag, many will be flying this week. In April 2014 the Confederate flag flew atop a school bus before the VFW Sport Clips Help A Hero 200 Nationwide Race at Darlington Raceway.**



# Flag

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atmosphere" at the race-track by allowing fans to exchange their Confederate flags for American flags.

"We hope fans will join us in creating an inclusive atmosphere that helps to broaden and grow the sport we all love," Wile said.

Fans will be able to exchange flags at Gate 39A, RV check-in.

International Speedway Corp., owner of Darlington Raceway, signed on in support of a NASCAR statement this summer following calls to remove the Confederate flag from the grounds of the South Carolina Statehouse.

At the direction of a broad, bipartisan coalition led by Gov. Nikki Haley, legislators voted to remove the flag from the Statehouse in July, three weeks after nine black parishioners were killed in a Charleston church.

The accused shooter, a white male who embraced Confederate symbols and was charged with murder, pleaded not guilty to federal hate crime charges.

Haley received support from NASCAR Chairman Brian France, who called for a ban on the flag.

"If there's more we can do to disassociate ourselves with that flag at our events than we've already done, then we want to do it," France told the Associated Press in June. "We are going to be as aggressive as we can to disassociate ourselves with that flag."

The flag is already banned from official use at NASCAR events.

The ISC, which owns 13 racetracks, didn't issue a ban, but in July it signed on to a NASCAR request



MORNING NEWS/FILE

**A member of Kevin Harvick's crew sported a Confederate flag-styled helmet during the 2014 Bojangles' Southern 500.**

that patrons "refrain from displaying the Confederate flag at our facilities and NASCAR events."

Days after the Charleston shooting Dale Earnhardt Jr., called the flag "offensive to an entire race" and supported NASCAR's decision to ban it.

Even with calls to ban the flag, some fans and vendors already have the battle flag flying as they stake out for the weekend races.

At a luncheon at the National Press Club in Washington on Wednesday, Haley reiterated points she made when she called for the flag's removal from the Statehouse after more than 50 years; noting that individuals still have the right to freedom of expression.

"As I said when I announced my intention to bring down the flag, this was a debate that did not need to have winners and losers," Haley said. "Those who revere the flag for reasons of ancestry and heritage retain every right to do so. But what happened in Charleston shed a different light on an issue our state had long struggled with."

Gov. Haley will attend the Bojangles' Southern 500 on Sunday with her husband, Michael; as will Republican Sen. Tim Scott.

Neither was available for

comment Wednesday.

Bob East, a native of Kokomo, Indiana, set up camp across from the Track Too Tough To Tame on Wednesday with a host of military, American and driver flags atop his camper—all waving alongside the Confederate flag.

East said he's aware of NASCAR's attempt to keep fans from flying the "rebel flag" at events but, like many fans, he isn't going to change what he's been doing for years, despite recent events.

"They can try but I don't think they can make people stop flying it," East said. "People might stop flying it for a couple weeks but they always start back again. It's part of the history and people want it here."

It's not just fans who display the Confederate flag proudly at races; a member of Kevin Harvick's crew sported a Confederate flag-styled helmet in the pits last year.

Harvick won the 2014 Bojangles' Southern 500.

"Anyone can come to these races if they want to and they're always welcome at them," East said. "All this stuff going on with the flag don't have nothing to do with NASCAR."

Morning News reporter Josh Lloyd contributed to this report.

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## <sup>148</sup> *PTR releases second round of commemorative rifles*

**BY SCOTT HARPER**  
SCOTT.HARPER@MYHorryNEWS.COM

Last year, Gov. Nikki Haley took a tour of the Aynor-based PTR Industries and was given one of the first South Carolina commemorative rifles produced by the company.

One thousand of the guns were produced and sold out in a hurry.

Now, the company located in the Cool Springs Industrial Park, is producing a second set of commemorative rifles honoring the Palmetto State.

PTR executive vice president John McNamara says the new line of rifles "represents the growth we were aiming for when we moved here."

McNamara said before the company relocated from Connecticut to Horry County, one model, the .308-caliber, was produced.

He said the new rifle, which is decorated with an emblem of the state of South Carolina, is not an AK-47, but it shoots the same bullet as an AK-47.

"It also accepts the same style of magazine as an AK-47. That means there are a lot of magazines out there that can be loaded into this firearm. A lot of times when companies come out with a new gun it has its own unique magazine that you have to buy from the manufacturer. We don't do that," he said. "Ammunition's

cheap and widely available."

McNamara said only 1,000 of the first set of commemorative guns were produced to keep the exclusivity of it. He said initially 500 of the new rifles are being made. If there is a demand, another 500 will be produced but there will be a 1,000-gun cap.

McNamara said people who bought the first commemorative guns did so for differing reasons.

Some people open the box one time, take pictures and then put the gun away while others "put it through its paces and shoot it and hunt with it and enjoy it," he said.

McNamara said the new line of rifles is ideal for hog hunting and can also be used for other game including deer.

McNamara said things are looking brighter for the company after a downturn earlier this year.

During the spring the company was put on notice after rent owed to Horry County topped \$73,000.

"We were able to reach an agreement with the county to get caught up on our rent. We now have an agreement on paper," he said. "[The county is] very confident about our ability to get the amount of jobs we had hoped for when we moved down here."

Currently PTR employs about 50 people.

One thing that has been a big boost to the company's finances is having other companies outsource their production to PTR.

"We actually do assembly and manufacturing work for other firearms brands in the industry. We signed a five-year deal for producing guns for another manufacturer. That firearm is built from parts we produce as well as parts they provide," he said.

McNamara said PTR is expected to build 1,000 to 1,500 guns each month for the company.

Plus, more of the PTR brand will be built.

"To date we have only produced a small segment of what our market is capable of. There are a huge variety of calibers and designs of guns we can offer to the community we have not yet done," McNamara said. "This is just the first step. We hope to launch one to three product lines per year down the road as we grow the business and add jobs."

The new commemorative rifles can be found at gun dealers in the area.

Will Gov. Haley be given one of the new commemorative rifles?

"The invitation is always open. I do not know how much room she has. We will see if she has room for one more," McNamara said.



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SCOTT HARPER / THE LORIS SCENE

**The new PTR Industries commemorative rifle line is marked with a symbol of South Carolina. The guns can be purchased at local gun dealerships.**

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## 148 Proposed pipeline will go through fields and woodlands

By Vic MacDonald

When a natural gas pipeline is constructed through mostly agriculture and timber land in Laurens County, the county's tax coffers will become \$1 million a year richer.

That's the message Kennie McKenzie, an engineer with Dominion Carolina Gas Transmission, brought last Tuesday to the Laurens County Council. Construction will begin in early 2017.

"We are anticipating approximately \$1 million in tax

revenue once the project goes in service," McKenzie said. The company is notifying landowners and working on potential conflicts.

The Transco to Charleston Project will have the Moore to Chappells Pipeline, the Dillon Pipeline, the Moore Compression Station and the Dorchester Compression Station.

Building and operating about 53 miles of 12-inch diameter pipeline in Laurens, Newberry, Greenwood and Spartanburg counties is part of the Moore to Chappells Pipeline.

About 26 miles of the pipeline will run through Lau-

rens County. Crossings will include the South Tyger, Enoree and Saluda Rivers and Hwys 221, 76, 72 and I-385, the council was told.

In other business, council turned down on a 3-3-1 vote member Stewart Jones' motion to have Laurens County write a letter to Gov. Nikki Haley urging withdrawal of state money from Planned Parenthood.

The organization is a target of conservatives who claim it is selling fetal tissue for medical research, a practice that is not illegal in the United States. A group that opposes the national Planned Parenthood organization took and posted to the in-

ternet video of Planned Parenthood executives, who did not know they were being filmed, talking about harvesting and selling the body parts of infants that are aborted.

Jones said, "I can't believe you guys aren't going to stand against this." Council members Keith Tollison, Dianne Anderson and Garrett McDaniel voted against Jones' motion, member Dr. David Pitts abstained.

Jones, council member Ted Nash and chairman Joe Wood voted in favor of the motion.

The council also cleared the way for a Turkish company to establish its first North American plant in Laurens County. Mogul South Carolina Nonwovens Corporated is going to invest \$17.5 million and create 38 jobs in a project that requires the acquisition of 20 acres near Gray Court.

The investment was known to the county as Project Lace, before its formal announcement last week by the SC Department of Commerce.

The council also passed on final reading Laurens County Fire General Fund Budget at \$842,836.35. The allocations are Laurens County, \$353,403.35, Clinton Rural, \$283,940, and Fountain Inn, \$205,493.

Council gave approvals to providing special tax credits for property owners rehabbing historic buildings, and placing a moratorium on new junkyards and mobile home parks as regulations for these are being studied by the Laurens County Planning Commission.

The next Laurens County Council meetings will be Sept. 8 and 22, and Oct. 6, 5:30 p.m. in the council chambers, second floor of the historic courthouse in downtown Laurens. Council sets aside 15 minutes for public comments at 6 p.m. (no prior registration required to speak to the council).

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HERITAGE ACT DEBATED

# STILL SEGREGATED?

## Plaque issue holds up decision on moving WWI monument

BY GAVIN JACKSON  
Morning News  
gjackson@florencenews.com

FLORENCE —“Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori, in memory of the service men from Florence County, South Carolina, who gave their lives in the World War,” reads the opening lines on a plaque formerly affixed to the 1928 World War I monument.

The recently restored plaque lists the 67 Florentines who gave their lives for their country from 1914 to 1918, specifically 42 “white” and 25 “colored” officers and enlisted men from Florence.

“Colored” was a word used to designate on signs places African-Americans could go, where they could be and entrances they could use during segregation.

It is also the word emblazoned on the plaque that may be placed at Florence Veterans Park soon.

Originally, plans were for the marble monument to be moved onto a recently poured concrete slab in the Florence Veterans Park on Tuesday, without the plaque. But a decision on whether the restored original plaque or a new plaque will adorn the monument hasn’t been determined yet by the American Legion, which owns the monument, in conjunction with the city, which owns the park.

City Manager Drew Griffin said that out of an abundance of caution, the move of the marble

monument will now not take place upon the decision of the plaque, due to the restrictive nature of the S.C. Heritage Act.

The Heritage Act, passed in 2000, would require a two-thirds majority of the South Carolina legislature to move or change the marble monument once it sits on public property.

It’s not clear if that would also include whether the original plaque or a new plaque could go on the monument, but in light of an ordeal ensnaring the town of Greenwood over trying to remove a similarly phrased plaque, no one in Florence wants to find out.

“The city attorney was very concerned on the matter and the way the act is being interpreted,” Griffin said. “The attorney general’s opinion is such a strict interpretation of the law, so that needs to be resolved prior to it being relocated.”

A meeting is expected early this week with Griffin, Mayor Stephen Wukela, representatives of the American Legion and Barry Wingard, who sits on the city’s Parks Commission and is chairman of the Veterans Park Committee.

“I don’t want to put anybody in an embarrassing situation, the city or the American Legion, and I don’t want to offend anybody,” Wingard said. “I agree that this needs to be washed out now,

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# Plaque

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rather than after the fact; there are opinions on both sides of the issue."

## 'In memory of the servicemen from Florence County'

Griffin said the city Parks Commission unanimously approved the monument's transfer earlier this year, but the wording on the plaque wasn't noticed until recently. In light of the Greenwood situation and in the post-Confederate flag era, the plaque is under new scrutiny.

Wukela, like Griffin, has received opinions from various people on the matter, including the City Council, which, should the decision come before it, he believes would vote not to place the plaque in its original form at the park. Wukela and other members lean toward a new plaque with the names alphabetized, with a reference somewhere to the change.

"Here it's different; we're considering erecting this monument new in a public park," Wukela said in comparison to Greenwood. "That troubles me a little bit, the idea of erecting in a public park a monument with segregated names on it. I have a hard time bringing myself to the conclusion that that makes sense."

Wukela, a Democrat, said the city would even pay for a new plaque. He suggests the old plaque be on display at the Florence County Museum or with other war artifacts in the county's soon-to-be-built Veterans Affairs administration building near Florence National Cemetery.

Members of the Greenwood American Legion Post 20 pushed for a change

to plaques on their monument honoring "those who gave their lives" in WWI and WWII that sits on Main Street in the city. At the Legion's bidding, Mayor Welborn Adams raised \$20,000 for new plaques, but joint resolutions introduced by the House and Senate at the start of the legislative session went nowhere.

In May, a lawsuit was filed against the state.

The efforts preceded the removal of the Confederate flag from Statehouse grounds July 10 after a marathon debate in the House. Days after, Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, said he would not take up any other monument changes, renaming roads or buildings or memorials "throughout the remainder of my time as speaker."

"The General Assembly, the House in particular, made it abundantly clear during the debate of the Confederate flag that the only issue they were willing to discuss was the placement of the battle flag on the north lawn of the Statehouse," Lucas said. "We reached a swift resolution last week, and in doing so, put an end to this discussion. Debate over this issue will not be expanded or entertained throughout the remainder of my time as speaker."

The Heritage Act, created in a compromise to remove the Confederate flag from the dome of the Statehouse in 2000 and to a flagpole next to a Confederate Soldiers Monument, was at the center

of a heated debate this summer.

Efforts to remove the flag found momentum after the massacre of nine parishioners at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston on June 17. The nine black victims included state Sen. Clementa Pinckney. The man charged with the shootings was photographed, in the past, with

white supremacist insignia and the Confederate flag.

A furor was already brewing over images of the man with the flag, the hate crime committed and the flag's controversial past. But an act of forgiveness by the victims' families created conditions for Republican Gov. Nikki Haley to create a broad, bipartisan coalition to call for the flag's removal from the Statehouse grounds to the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum.

But Florence Veterans Park isn't the front lawn of the Statehouse, and a stationary marble monument with a bronze plaque is not a flag.

Still, many believe the park isn't a place for division.

"I think this is similar to flag in some ways because if it's offensive to members of our community. It has that same effect. It's a divisive effect that's certainly the opposite you want to accomplish," Wukela said. "I don't think for a minute the Veterans Park Committee or members of the American Legion or Parks and Beautification Commission wanted to erect this monument in a protest to the civil rights movement, and I believe that was the case in regards to the flag when first placed atop the state Capitol."

Councilman Ed Robinson, an outspoken critic of racial and inequality issues, also is a Vietnam veteran who served in the Army from 1969 to 1971. He considers the park somewhat hallowed ground.

"If you're going to do something that is going to offend some group of people, then it shouldn't be done," Robinson said. "All this will probably create some kind of backlash that we need to stay as far away from as we can."

## Moving history

"A tremendous crowd witnessed the exercises

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... veterans of three wars were honor guests," the Florence Morning News Review proclaimed of the May 30, 1928, event. The \$1,000 marble drinking-fountain monument, created by Florence Memorial Works for the American Legion, was unveiled in front of the old Florence Library.

It is believed that in the 1960s, pre-Heritage Act times, the monument made its way to American Legion Fred H. Sexton Post 1 on East Palmetto Street — where it has stood since.

It wasn't until recently that efforts were underway to restore the weathered and vandalized monument close to its original luster for placement at the veterans park. Workers at Brown Memorials in Florence have buffed the bronze plaque like new for wherever it will be displayed.

Eight thousand dollars was raised for the monu-

ment, and National Guard troops are set to move the marble from Post 1 to the park when its fate is decided.

Wingard said the park doesn't have a WWI monument and that whichever form is decided on for the current memorial will be a great addition to the \$2 million park, which is on 6 acres near the Florence Civic Center.

"They (American Legion) are excited they are able to support the city and community by making donation. If we had to start from scratch to build, it would be tens of thousands of dollars," Wingard said. "I don't think anybody wants anything negative to happen. It all boils down to the plaque."

The retired lieutenant colonel, who served in the Army and Air Force for 30 years, said that if it were his decision, he would keep the original plaque and put an informational panel nearby explaining segregation.

Post 1 Commander

Charles Bethea could not be reached for comment.

Should the plaque end up in the hands of the Florence County Museum after discussions this week, curator Stephen Motte said it would be put in context, like objects related to slavery and the segregation era.

"We're sensitive to the way we exhibit and interpret objects," Motte said. "But we are more in the business of preserving history than trying to change it in a way that is going to satisfy whatever the politically correct opinion is."

Councilman Robinson understands those differences and believes the museum is a better fit.

"The Veterans Park is somewhat sacred ground that represents people who fought, gave their lives, their blood, sweat and tears to preserve sanctity of this country," Robinson said. "The museum is somewhat different; it's more educational than sacred."



Title: **Court sets deadline for school improvement**  
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# Court sets deadline for school improvement

## Lawmakers need plan by Feb. 1

By JAMIE SELF

The (Columbia) State

COLUMBIA — Lawmakers have until February to draft legislation to improve the state's rural schools.

That deadline was issued Thursday by the S.C. Supreme Court, less than a year after the state's highest court ruled South Carolina is not meeting its constitutional obligation to provide a quality education to children in low-income schools.

In a 3-2 order issued Thursday, the court gave Republican Gov. Nikki Haley and the leaders of the GOP-controlled House and Senate a Feb. 1 deadline to develop a plan — including legislation — to improve those schools.

Last year, the court ordered the

state and school districts to work together to come up with an improvement plan. However, Carl Epps, an attorney representing the school districts that sued the state in 1993, said the two sides needed a timeline from the court to help move along the process.

"If the (state's) proposed remedies are inadequate to meet the children's needs, the court will intervene," Epps said. "I'm always hopeful and optimistic that the General Assembly will do what it is required to do to uphold the Constitution."

House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, called the deadline in Thursday's court order

arbitrary, adding it suggested the court's three-member majority had a "complete lack of understanding of the legislative process."

"Clearly legislation is not passed by proposal. It's passed by actual bills that have to go through the House, through the Senate and go through the veto process," said Lucas, an attorney. "Those are the rules that we have to play by."

Last November, the court ruled 3-2 that the state had violated its constitutional duty to provide a "minimally adequate education" to all S.C. public-school students.

Chief Justice Jean Toal and Associate Justices Don Beatty and Kaye

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## COURT

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Hearn formed the majority in that ruling, while Associate Justices Costa Pleicones and John Kittridge dissented.

That ruling was long sought by 39 rural school districts that sued the state in 1993, alleging they did not have enough money to educate their students.

In response, House Speaker Lucas formed a task force of legislators and business and education professionals, including representatives of the school districts that sued the state, to propose how the state should address inequities between affluent schools and poor ones.

The House-appointed task force and its subcommittees

have been meeting since the beginning of the year. It plans to produce a report in January with policy recommendations.

The state Senate also named a committee, which has been meeting, to try to address the high court's school-equity ruling.

Lucas said the timing of Thursday's order could be politically motivated.

"To have this ruling come at this point in time certainly makes me wonder whether the court is worried about this issue or just creating a legacy for the chief justice prior to her term expiring."

Toal, who retires at the end of this year, said Thursday it

would be inappropriate for her, as a member of the court,

to comment on Thursday's order.

However, she added, the order was the court's reaction to a request by the rural school districts. In June, those districts asked the court to create a framework to guide the state and school districts as they sought a school-equity solution.

Earlier this year, legislators elected Associate Justice Pleicones to succeed Toal as chief justice. Pleicones, who dissented from the court's 2014 school-equity ruling and Thursday's order setting deadlines, will be presiding over the court when the school-reform proposal is scheduled to reach the court for review early next year.

On Thursday, the court or-

dered the formation of a panel of three experts by Oct. 15 to identify the educational needs of students in the districts that sued the state.

The General Assembly and school districts each will choose and pay for one expert on that three-member panel. State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman will be the third expert.

The governor, S.C. House and state Senate have until Feb. 1 to present the court and the school districts with a plan to address the needs of poor schools, including legislation and dates to put that plan into action.

School districts have until March 1 to respond.