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Title: **Farmers want federal help for flood loses**

Author:

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### **Farmers want federal help for flood loses**

The South Carolina Farm Bureau wants Gov. Nikki Haley to seek money from Congress for farmers whose crops were destroyed by last month's historic flooding. The agriculture advocacy group says South Carolina's farmers lost at least \$376 million. The nonprofit is holding a news conference Monday afternoon. Its newly elected president, Harry Ott, says family farms need help — AP

Title: **Shwedos take on recovery together**  
 Author: BY AVERY G. WILKS [awilks@thestate.com](mailto:awilks@thestate.com)  
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## THE FLOOD OF 2015: RECOVERY

# Shwedos take on recovery together

Kevin and Beth Shwedo were working round-the-clock as volunteers after the state's October flooding. Now, Kevin Shwedo has taken on a new recovery leadership role.

BY AVERY G. WILKS  
[awilks@thestate.com](mailto:awilks@thestate.com)

During 32 years as an Army wife, Beth Shwedo learned to adapt to her husband's long hours and absences.

Col. Kevin Shwedo would leave for a month or two on military missions, and in the days before cellphones or Skype, there would be little, if any, contact between them. It was jarring at first for Beth Shwedo, who said her father worked a 9-to-5 job and that she expected a similar routine when she got married. Eventually, she said, she adjusted as she began to understand the importance of his work.

Kevin Shwedo retired from the Army in 2011 and soon after became director of South Carolina's Department of Motor Vehicles. But for Beth Shwedo, the past few weeks have felt much like he is on another mission, even while they live in the same home.

The Shwedos were among South Carolina's volunteers who worked round-the-clock in the early days after the Oct. 4 flooding that left behind damaged homes, businesses and lives. Now, Kevin Shwedo has taken on a new leadership role in the state's flood recovery.

Early on, Beth Shwedo, who is chairwoman of the volunteer board of directors for the Red Cross of Central South Carolina, worked tirelessly as a volunteer with the organization. She took her husband with her from shel-

ter to shelter, dropping off supplies and asking how they could help. Kevin Shwedo said they volunteered together for roughly 14 or more hours straight in the two days after the flooding.

"I was just like one of a million ants that was busy doing what I was doing," Beth Shwedo said. "I was by no means a standout in all of this. I was just one piece in a puzzle."

But two weeks after the Oct. 4 flooding, Gov. Nikki Haley appointed Kevin Shwedo indefinitely as South Carolina's flood recovery coordinator, a position created to address the state's long-term needs.

Kevin and Beth Shwedo both knew the position would bring long hours, challenging work and little time to just sit down and talk. But, Beth Shwedo said, "It's your civic duty to help those that need help."

And as her flood recovery work wound down, his was just getting started.

The flood recovery coordinator job entails driving to affected areas throughout the state to identify unmet needs, attending town hall meetings to hear from counties and municipalities and sending more than 100 emails per day.

Shwedo said he had no previous flood recovery experience before his appointment and that he also had to learn how the recovery process, agencies and groups should work.

"My No. 1 job right now is to accelerate the recovery," Kevin Shwedo said. "But you've got a limited amount of resources. Read that as money and supplies and everything else. You've got a limited amount of volunteer organizations, and you've got a plethora of disaster."

Kevin Shwedo's work days often start before 8 a.m. and end early the next morning. Some days, he saw his wife only when their missions overlapped, bumping into her at a Red Cross fundraiser or at a disaster recovery center.

"We literally would not see each other except at night to say, 'Hello,' and maybe, maybe in the morning," Kevin Shwedo said.

He said jumping into a position that did not previously exist, for which there were no standard operating procedures or existing staff, has been challenging. He has been used to order throughout his military career, and he got a dose of it in college.

Shwedo played football at the University of North Carolina in the late 1970s, and he remembers a certain resident adviser who cracked down on him and his buddies when they made too much noise in the athletic dorm.

Shwedo said he had an ego, and that it frustrated him to no end that a girl was in charge. "I hated her guts," Shwedo said.

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But it wasn't long before the two began hanging out socially, going on a ski trip together and later meeting up after a bowl game. They started dating, and then Kevin and Beth were married in June 1979.

Since then, they have had two children and moved 24 times in 32 years with the Army. But more than four years after retirement, he is again often gone from home.

This time, the couple catches up over the phone, often while Kevin Shwedo is on long drives to town halls and meetings across the state. And he said he is thankful when he can sleep in

his own bed at night.

Understanding the importance of his work also helps, just as it did when he was in the Army, Beth Shwedo said.

"Once you see the devastation and what people are going through, there is absolutely no room to complain," she said. "You do what needs to be done at the time it needs to be done."

More than two months after the flooding struck South Carolina, things have started to slow down. Disaster recovery agencies, groups and volunteers have moved out of the immediate response phase and toward the long-term recovery period.

Kevin Shwedo still likely has many long days ahead of him, and a few more late nights at his desk at the Joint Field Office in Blythewood, not far from the state DMV headquarters where he intends to return when his work as the flood recovery coordinator is finished. Until then, Kevin and Beth will keep soldiering on.

"You know it's temporary, but you make it work," Beth Shwedo said. "It's kind of like somebody going through med school. If you get one day on the weekend or a couple of hours on the weekend, that's great. You kind of get your fix."

“

**MY NO. 1 JOB RIGHT NOW IS TO ACCELERATE THE RECOVERY. BUT YOU'VE GOT A LIMITED AMOUNT OF RESOURCES. ... YOU'VE GOT A LIMITED AMOUNT OF VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS, AND YOU'VE GOT A PLETHORA OF DISASTER.”**

*Kevin Shwedo*

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PROVIDED PHOTO

Col. Kevin and Beth Shwedo at the Masters Tournament at Augusta National golf course.

Title: **BESTBETS**  
 Author:  
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## BEST BETS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6

### >>> MUSEUM

#### FIRST CITIZENS FIRST SUNDAY:

Noon-5 p.m. Sunday at the State Museum. General admission is only \$1 for guests. Guests can explore the museum's four floors of South Carolina art, cultural history, natural history and science/technology, including the new Boeing Observatory and the new Robert B. Airlie Collection of Historical Astronomy located on the fourth floor. 301 Gervais St. (803) 898-4921, [www.scmuseum.org](http://www.scmuseum.org)

### >>> LIVE MUSIC

#### DIXIELAND JAZZ CONCERT: 2:30-5

p.m. Sunday at the Lourie Center. Enjoy jazz, ragtime and swing with Dick Goodwin, trumpet; Doug Graham, clarinet; Bruce Clark, trombone; Reggie Sullivan, bass; Jim Hall, drums and Aletha Jacobs, piano. \$10 adults, free to students 18 and younger. 1650 Park Circle, Maxcy Gregg Park, Columbia (just off Pickens near Blossom). [www.carolinajazzsociety.com](http://www.carolinajazzsociety.com)

### >>> HOLIDAY THEATER

**CHRISTMAS BELLES:** 3 p.m. Sunday at the Firehouse Theatre at American Legion Post 193. Christmas Belles is the hilarious story of a church Christmas pageant nearly brought down by a stomach virus, a would-be bride who accidentally swallows her engagement ring, a kidnapping and an angry, jilted Futrelle sister. The pageant's salvation comes from a most unlikely source, and laughter and warm, holiday feelings are the result. Member \$10, Adult \$15, Senior (60+) \$14 and Youth (17-) \$10. 102 Lexington Ave., Chapin. [www.chapintheatre.org](http://www.chapintheatre.org)

### >>> STAGE PERFORMANCE

**BAD GIRLFRIEND:** 6:30 p.m. Sunday at the Trustus Side Door Theater. Debra McQueen will read from her new collection of poems, "bad girlfriend." With live music by Watson Village, the event features a rambunctious reading by the poet and a book signing. The event is free and open to the public. 520 Lady St. [dfmcqueen@yahoo.com](mailto:dfmcqueen@yahoo.com), <http://mizmcqueen.wix.com/>

badgirlfriend

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 7

### >>> HOLIDAY

#### GOVERNOR'S MANSION CHRISTMAS

**OPEN HOUSE:** 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Governor's Mansion. Governor Nikki Haley, First Gentleman Michael Haley and their children, Rena and Nalin, invite South Carolinians to join them for a Christmas open house. Open house guests are asked to bring canned goods to be donated to the Harvest Hope Food Bank. The Carillon Carolers will perform. Decorations by Columbia Garden Club. The event is free of charge, open to the public, and no reservations are required. 800 Richland St.

*Send items to [calendars@thestate.com](mailto:calendars@thestate.com) at least two weeks in advance*

### TODAY ON THESTATE.COM

In anticipation of The State newspaper's 125th anniversary, we take a look at the newsmakers and events over the paper's history. See the stories at [www.thestate.com/state-125](http://www.thestate.com/state-125).



PROVIDED PHOTO

Rhonda Lynn Lampley (Pam Godfrey) serves Raynerd Chism (Lee Herrington) in a scene from "Christmas Belles."



PROVIDED PHOTO

Governor Nikki Haley and her family invite South Carolinians and their families to join them for a Christmas open house.



Title: **Aiken rep just won't letgo of the flag**  
 Author: BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com  
 Size: 71.61 square inch  
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## THE BUZZ

# Aiken rep just won't let go of the flag

Hotline to "defend Christmas" debuts in South Carolina

Why you won't see USC's football coach opening on the state job board

BY ANDREW SHAIN  
 ashain@thestate.com

Just because **Chris Corley** lost the battle to keep the Confederate flag flying at the S.C. State House does not mean the freshman Republican legislator from Aiken is giving up the war.

Corley perhaps is best known for suggesting the state replace the Confederate flag with a white flag of surrender during the lengthy flag debate this summer.

Last week, however, he introduced a bill that would let voters decide whether to restore the Civil War banner to the State House's north lawn. He also sent out Christmas cards — fea-



Corley

turing a photo of the Confederate flag at the State House — admonishing his colleagues for banishing it.

"May your Christmas be filled with memories of a happier time when South Carolina's leaders possessed morals, convictions and the principles to stand for what is right," the card read. It finishes with: "May you have a blessed Christmas, and may you take this joyous time as an opportunity to ask for forgiveness of all your sins such as betrayal."

The attorney, who practices in Augusta, is building a reputation as a bit of a political flamethrower in the Republican-controlled General Assembly. There, Corley has fired barbs at GOP colleagues as well as Republican Gov. **Nikki Haley**.

Corley told The Buzz his Christmas

card's message was supposed to be a tongue-in-cheek tweak at lawmakers who, he said, chose speedy political correctness over the views of their constituents.

"It's supposed to get people to think about why you are up there," he said. "You're there to represent the will of the people. You're not up there to be royalty. They betrayed the will of their constituents."

Corley is unhappy the flag decision came during a specially called session in July, just weeks after state Sen.

**Clementa Pinckney**, D-Jasper, was gunned down with eight other parishioners at Charleston's Emanuel AME Church.

"You really want to mend racial

SEE BUZZ, 10A

## FROM PAGE 5A

# BUZZ

tension and racial strife?" he asked. "Don't go making backroom deals.

You'll have one group who gets the short end of stick and make the side even more mad and hurt the goal of bringing all of South Carolina together."

Lawmakers should have waited until they met

again in January to consider proposals to take down the flag, letting the bills go through the normal House and Senate committees before a final vote, Corley said.

The General Assembly still would have voted to remove the flag, Corley thinks. But the debate

would have been more open and inclusive, he added.

Despite wanting to keep the flag, Corley has no interest in spending more than \$5 million to expand the S.C. Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum to accommodate the flag removed from the

State House grounds in July.

That money should go to roads and other needs, said the 35-year-old father of three. "A piece of cloth is not a big issue when you consider what the state has gone through."

This year, Corley

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showed his ire for Haley in Facebook posts, addressing her as "Governor" Haley and as Nimrata, her birth name. Corley said he is unhappy with what he called Haley's petty acts, including sending legislators her roads proposal after House members had spent months drafting their own plan.

"She's trying very hard to get to Washington, D.C., and not doing enough for the citizens of South Carolina," he said.

Corley finds fault with other GOP colleagues as well.

He suspects some Republican lawmakers who voted to punt the flag could face challengers in June's GOP primary because they did not include their constituents in their quick decision. "They were not able to go home and gauge them."

Corley, who succeeded **Roland Smith** after he retired from office, understands he also could draw a primary opponent.

If he loses his seat, "it would not be end of the

world for me," Corley said. "It seems a lot of more glamorous when you're running for office than when you get up there."

### A CALL FOR HOLIDAY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Told "no" to your nativity scene? The Palmetto Family Council has started a "Defend Christmas Freedom Hotline" for folks to report religious freedom violations in South Carolina.

The Columbia-based organization, which has opposed same-sex marriage and pushed for abortion limits, wants "real" complaints, according to an email.

Gripes about Starbucks' red cups, clerks wishing customers "Happy Holidays" or school calendars saying "Winter Break" are not the aim.

"Every year, we get random calls," Palmetto Family Council president **Oran Smith** said. "By formalizing it a bit we hope to help folks think through what is a real threat and what is In-

ternet squawk."

The hotline has yielded some calls. The council is researching the credibility of complaints about undisclosed government agencies "banning a Christian symbol of

Christmas from a person's personal space," Smith said.

The hotline is not just to defend Christmas.

"Our effort applies to any religious holiday observance — Hanukkah, et cetera, as well," Smith said.

### WHEN NO APPLICATION IS NEEDED

Armchair coaches who want to apply for **Steve Spurrier's** old job with the Gamecocks will have to call University of South Carolina athletics director **Ray Tanner** directly.

While most state jobs must be posted publicly for at least five working days, openings for athletics coaches at state universities are exempted from that pesky requirement by S.C. law.

Turns out so are jobs in the General Assembly, Judicial Department and governor's office.

Perhaps some of USC's coaching also-rans can get work with the House Education and Public Works Committee.

### 2016 IN SC

**U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas:** Taking part in U.S. Sen. **Tim Scott's** presidential town hall meeting Monday in Greenville.

**Gov. John Kasich, R-Ohio:** Participating in a Conservative Leadership Project town hall meeting Tuesday with S.C. Attorney General **Alan Wilson** in Myrtle Beach.

**GOP businessman Donald Trump:** Holding a Pearl Harbor Day rally Monday at Patriots Point in Mount Pleasant and participating in a Conservative Leadership Project town hall meeting Saturday with Wilson at University of South Carolina-Aiken.

Follow Shain on Twitter: @andyshain



Title: **'Force of nature,' Toal strode through history**  
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## SOUTH CAROLINA SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE

# 'Force of nature,' Toal strode through history

Toal modernized the S.C. court system,  
brought more transparency

BY JOHN MONK jmonk@thestate.com

**T**wenty-eight days before she retires from the court she has been a part of for 27 years and led for almost 16, Chief Justice Jean Hoefer Toal is content.

"I have been so fortunate to be a part of the generation into which I was born," says Toal, 72, sitting in a chair at the front of the South Carolina Supreme Court courtroom, where she has heard and presided over some of the state's biggest legal battles of the past quarter-century.

"We came to law school at a time when the Vietnam War was at its height, when the quest for equal opportunity for all people was on the front burner. It caused us to be very serious about what we wanted to do. We didn't feel we should

wait. We wanted to take the South Carolina that we loved, that wasn't there yet, and create a new South Carolina."

Over the years, in that courtroom, Toal, who grew up in Columbia, has

**AND VALUES THAT  
ALL WILL ABIDE BY."**

*Jean Toal*

SEE TOAL, 14A

**➔ MORE INSIDE**

Read about Jean Toal's role in advancing women in the law in today's Palmetto section, **1C**

**➔ ONLINE**

**AT THESTATE.COM:** See more photos with this story.

**“**

**THE LAW IS A SACRED  
THING ... THERE IS A  
BASELINE OF ORDER**

## TOAL

been a major part of making a new South Carolina. She has written opinions in disputes where lives and the environment were at stake, where billion-dollar gambling interests were trying to maintain their enormous influence on the state, where children's educational futures were on the line and where the interests of big business, powerful professions and the free market were pitted against those of consumers.

But Toal's life has always been about far more than legal cases, as a new

University of South Carolina Press collection of essays – called “Madame Chief Justice” – chronicles.

For more than four decades, she has been a game-changer in multiple arenas, pulling off the high-wire act of being a successful revolutionary for civil rights and women's and other causes while inhabiting the conservative, hidebound and sometimes rarified world of South Carolina's political and legal classes.

Her stature is such that on Thursday, she was one

of a small handful of speakers – along with Vice President Joe Biden – who were permitted to give speeches at a farewell dinner in Charleston honoring longtime Mayor Joe Riley, who is retiring. Two of Toal's friends in high places, U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and current Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, each wrote essays about Toal for *Madame Chief Justice*.

“Championing a cause – be it civil rights, women in the law, or court reform –

is one thing. Making a difference, making changes happen, is quite another,” write S.C. historian Walter Edgar and U.S. Judge Joe Anderson, who co-authored the book's closing essay.

The 189-page book, likely to be a how-to guide for lawyers and political strategists as well as a historical reference book, contains 23 essays, divided among Toal's impacts in various areas as well as personal and professional glimpses by colleagues.

One of the most person-



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al chapters is by Toal's adult daughters, Jean and Lilla, who detail what it was like growing up in a family with an extraordinary mother who lives her life at full throttle and who, at the age of 69, took a notion to go paragliding off the Isle of Palms.

### 'TRANSFORMATIONAL' FIGURE

The one thing Toal did not want as she retired was a book about her.

"I had to call her three times starting a year and a half ago before she reluctantly agreed to let us do it," Anderson recalled last week, describing Toal as a "transformational" figure on the state legal and political stage. "I finally convinced her it wasn't just her – it was a story that needed to be told. She's been around a lot of battles."

Eventually, Toal consented. She read all the essays, but exercised no editorial control, said USC School of Law professor Lewis Burke, the book's co-editor.

"She might have changed a comma here and there, or corrected a citation, but she made no changes in what was written," Burke said.

Some people leave their mark in one or two areas. Over the years Toal:

- As a justice, joined or wrote opinions directing the setting of minimum educational standards in state public schools and directing more funding to come from the General Assembly.

- Took the lead through court opinions in stamping out what she described as the addictive gambling scourge of video poker.

- Was a pioneer for women in the law, both as lawyers and judges. As a fledgling lawyer, she took on and won the case of Vickie Eslinger, a young law school student who wanted to be a page in the S.C. Senate but was told she couldn't because she was female. One of Toal's favorite expressions is "Leave the ladder down," meaning women who ascend politically or legally must serve as mentors.

- Pried tens of millions out of the General Assembly and Congress to get money in the Judicial Department's budget for more judges and to put the state's court records and dockets on a computerized system in large part accessible by the public.

To persuade the Republican-majority General Assembly to spend more money on lawyers and judges, Toal – whose specialty is framing issues in such a way that people come to agree with her – devised a strategy whereby she argued that a modern, efficient judiciary is essential to getting businesses to come to South Carolina – an assertion that won over business-oriented Republicans.

"Her efforts have brought South Carolina's judiciary from its somewhat closed, quill-and-ink operations to the forefront in technology," writes former Gov. Richard Riley in another essay.

- Authored or wrote numerous decisions upholding open meetings and open public records. She also made briefs filed with the Supreme Court available online and opened up her courtrooms to students by the use of

technology and other methods.

### GOING 'TO CHANGE THE LAW'

Despite her pro-open government record, Toal in 2014 joined in a 3-2 ruling that autopsy reports aren't public records.

Critics called the ruling perplexing, since the reports can play an important role in determining the facts in officer-involved shootings and other deaths of high public interest. They say coroners, who issue the reports, could redact someone's personal information before releasing them.

In an interview, Toal said she had to go by the law in making autopsy reports off-limits to the public.

Columbia lawyer Jay Bender, who argued and lost that case for The (Sumter) Item newspaper, said the decision case shows Toal doesn't play favorites.

"It's an example of her integrity," said Bender, a close Toal friend and the state's pre-eminent legal advocate in open government cases.

Bender believes Toal's essential nature is that of a fighter.

"If Toal were in the movies, she would be tough and combative Jimmy Cagney," writes Bender in one of the book's essays.

Back in the 1970s, when the state's first Freedom of Information Act was passed and Toal was a lawyer-legislator in the General Assembly, Toal lost an open meeting case before the S.C. Supreme Court, Bender writes. The

justices basically ruled that public bodies had a right to consider budgets in secret.

After losing the case, Toal walked out of the courtroom. When asked where she was going, Toal replied, "I'm going across the street (to the General Assembly) and change the law." She did. Today, it is against the law for public bodies such as school boards and county councils to consider budgets in secret.

In conversation, Toal can get fiery when pressing a point, drawing close to the person she's talking with and throwing off a mix of logic and facts delivered at high velocity.

Asked about her assertive temperament, Toal smiles. "I very much concede that I understand the power of controlled aggression," she says, explaining that it's part of a trial lawyer's psyche to be fierce. "Sometimes you need to get people's attention. But you don't need to beat them over the head with it. But yes, passion needs a face."

At Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, she played catcher on the softball team and goalie on the field hockey team for four years. "Goalies and catchers have this similarity – they're not scared to take the ball, whether it comes in your nose or your noggin or wherever," Toal says.

In legal chambers, Toal channels her intensity in a different way.

"She was truly a force of nature. She never stopped," writes Columbia lawyer Blake Hewitt in one essay about his experience as one of her Su-

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preme Court law clerks. "I have never known such persistent diligence, such serial focus and such relentless determination to succeed."

At times, Toal uses what might politely be called salty language.

In one of the book's essays, U.S. Judge Cameron Currie recalls meeting Toal some 50 years ago. "Jean addressed her younger sister in language I had never heard before. I was terrified." Over the years, Currie became an admirer of what she calls "the strength of (Toal's) personality and the force of her intellect."

That intellect is what stands out to I.S. Leevy Johnson, a Columbia lawyer who graduated from law school with Toal and served with her in the S.C. House of Representatives in the 1970s.

In that era, Johnson said in an interview, there were three representatives other lawmakers went to when they wanted to clarify complex issues: Bob Sheheen, who went on to become House Speaker, Henry Floyd, who now serves on the U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, and Toal.

In the new book, Johnson, a close friend, writes in an essay about another side of Toal: "a devoted wife (to husband Bill, a retired lawyer) a mentoring mother of her two daughters, and a doting grandmother of her two grandchildren."

#### **'IRRITATED SOME PEOPLE'**

Over the years, Toal's manner "has irritated some people," says Rep. Walton McLeod, D-New-

berry, a lawyer, businessman and former counsel for the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control from 1968 to 1994.

McLeod, who observed Toal in the courtroom, says he regarded her aggressive manner as a facade to advance her cause.

"She's a great actress," McLeod says. "She would put on a mask of umbrage. It was a pattern. Some people can't tolerate that, but it didn't bother me. Now, I like pushy people – they cause you to accomplish more."

His takeaway: "I'm kind of proud of Jean Toal, and I've admired her brains and ability. Even when she's aiming at you, you can't help but admire her stuff."

When something or someone stands in the way of what she believes is the law, Toal doesn't hesitate to charge ahead.

On June 30, 2000, when most people thought that state law from July 1 forward was going to declare the machines used for video poker illegal, then-Circuit Court Judge Gerald Smoak – at the behest of video poker lawyers – issued an order in Jasper County prohibiting the State Law Enforcement Division from enforcing that law. At the time, video poker was a powerful, \$2 billion a year industry in the state, with tens of thousands of machines or parlors.

Later that day, then SLED-chief Robert Stewart brought the judge's order to Toal's attention. Toal, who was at home in her kitchen, instantly convened an emergency telephone meeting of a

majority of justices. Stewart brought the order over, Toal hand-wrote an order vacating Smoak's order, and the justices voted to approve it.

The next morning, "SLED agents crossed the state enforcing the ban on video gambling," now-U.S. Judge Richard Gergel wrote for the book in an essay called "An Unrelenting Judicial Warrior in South Carolina's Video Poker Wars."

Recalling those days, Stewart in an interview says, "Video poker was a major problem in South Carolina. Addiction was causing suicides, children left in cars, and people weren't robbing banks any more, they were robbing all these cash businesses that had video poker machines. The Mafia was coming into the state to launder money."

For Toal, Stewart says, "Right is right, and wrong is wrong. She's going to stand up for what's right and follow through with it."

That sense of right does seem to be inborn.

When she was 10, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its landmark decision of *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kan.* Its mandate to admit African-Americans to public schools shocked South Carolina whites, who lived in a segregated society whose codes were enforced by violence if necessary.

At the time, when Toal heard her grandmother complaining about the U.S. Supreme Court decision, she asked, "What's wrong with that? What would be wrong with go-

ing to school with Negro (the term used by polite

white people in the 1950s) children?" Her grandmother became very angry, Toal recalled.

In 1961, as a Dreher High School student and member of a young people's interracial, interfaith group, Toal saw what became a mass arrest of 181 peaceful black residents singing patriotic songs on the S.C. State House steps, as "vicious, mean white people screamed and yelled every kind of imprecation you could think of."

Toal went to their city trial, where she saw South Carolina's great African-American civil rights lawyer, the late Matthew Perry, lose their case. But Perry appealed and won a great victory in the U.S. Supreme Court, when the arrests were overturned because, the court ruled, peaceful protesters had a right to freedom of speech.

#### **HARD WORK**

Despite that experience, Toal didn't think of being a lawyer until, while a

student at Agnes Scott College, she signed up for a constitutional law class at Emory University.

"I was going to be a teacher, which is what most women did in those days," Toal recalls. "But after two weeks, I was hooked. I went and applied to law school."

Over the years, Toal has confronted personal dilemmas. Asked how she squared being Catholic, a religion opposed to the death penalty, with being a justice whose decisions have sent people to death

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row, she said, "That's been a tough issue for me." But "some acts that are so violative of the basic compact with society that if you knowingly do those acts you must face the consequences."

Asked for advice to young lawyers, Toal said they should remember that good work is the result of hard work.

"Staying to the task and doing the unlovely work it takes to make their product a success is an awfully big part of the success a young person can achieve in the profession – not going for the slick and easy and the quick, but spending the time it takes to get the small things

right."

When she retires from her \$148,000-a-year job, Toal won't go into private practice, where she could easily command a six-figure salary. Instead, she'll go on what is called "active retired status," where she will fill in for trial judges or justices when needed, as many state and federal judges have.

Toal's last year on the court almost didn't happen. Traditionally, incumbent justices and judges are re-elected by the 170-member Legislature. Traditionally, they often retire nearing the retirement age of 72.

But in 2014, as Toal's

term expired, associate justice Costa Pleicones announced he was running for the chief justice seat. The result was a historic contest – no sitting chief justice had been challenged in the modern era – between two respected jurists. Pleicones came within 11 votes of winning.

When The State newspaper ran a story about Toal's hotly contested race – reportedly the first in 100 years in which a chief justice was opposed in a bid for office – to win another term as Chief Justice, the headline on the story included the phrase "Game of Thrones."

The phrase, from a

popular book and television series, angered Toal, who upbraided a reporter, saying, "Listen, this is not a game to me."

Asked last week why she took that headline so seriously, Toal elaborates.

"The law is a sacred thing," she says. "We have premised an entire civilization on the notion that there is a tiebreaker (the courts) – and it's the fundamental legitimacy of the rule of law itself.

"It's not built on what's popular," she continues. "It's built on a certain assumption that there is a baseline of order and values that all will abide by – even if all do not agree."

Title: **'Force of nature,' Toal strode through history**  
 Author: BYJOHN MONK [jmonk@thestate.com](mailto:jmonk@thestate.com)  
 Size: 226.61 square inch  
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

TIM DOMINICK [tdominick@thestate.com](mailto:tdominick@thestate.com)

As Jean Toal's long tenure on the S.C. Supreme Court winds down, a book of essays explores her powerful influence.



THE STATE FILE PHOTOGRAPH

Toal congratulates then-Chief Judge of the S.C. Court of Appeals, Kaye Hearn, left; both ran unopposed for election by the S.C. House in 1999. Hearn now serves on the Supreme Court.



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Gov. Nikki Haley greets Toal in the chambers of the South Carolina House Jan. 21 after Toal's final appearance as chief justice at the State of the State address.



Title: **Group holding vigil to support Syrian refugees**  
 Author: BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND [ccleveland@aikenstandard.com](mailto:ccleveland@aikenstandard.com)  
 Size: 47.27 square inch  
 Aiken, SC Circulation: 19635



# Group holding vigil to support Syrian refugees

BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND

[ccleveland@aikenstandard.com](mailto:ccleveland@aikenstandard.com)

A local, informal group has planned a candlelight vigil in support of Syrian refugees and to oppose what it is calling an “anti-Syrian refugee resolution” proposed by Aiken County Council.

The vigil is scheduled immediately before the council meeting from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Tuesday in front of the Aiken County Government Building, 1930 University Parkway, and will feature a sign line, candles and speakers, according to an email sent by the group.

Aiken resident David Matos is a part of the group, which he said is being informally called “Aiken Welcomes Syrian Refugees.” Matos told the *Aiken Standard* he didn’t have a number of who is expected to arrive Tuesday, but said an “ad hoc” group, especially people of faith communities, pulled together in response to the resolution.

Council is expected to have a resolution drafted regarding its stance on Syrian refugee resettlement at the meeting. A recent letter from S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley to Secretary of State John Kerry asking South Carolina not be considered for any Syrian refugee resettlement circulated its meeting in November.

Some council members also expressed concern regarding potential terrorists attacks due to the proximity of the Savannah River Site and in light of recent attacks in Paris.

“We think that their concerns are based more on fears than facts,” Matos said. “The refugees that we do take in are the people who have the most rigorous screening of all the people who come in the United States. It’s not impossible that people who want to harm us would infiltrate refugees,

but it’s unlikely.”

He thinks home-grown terrorism is a problem as well and claims the Paris attacks involved European nationals, not Syrians.

Matos is the president of the Carolina Peace Resource Center in Columbia, which he said has also helped with refugee aid in West Columbia in the past. He said he has been researching the Syrian crisis and has helped to raise around \$2,500 for Syrian refugee relief through fund raisers.

The Aiken group has created a Facebook page at [facebook.com/aikenwelcomessyrian](https://facebook.com/aikenwelcomessyrian) refugees detailing what it calls misinformation presented by council. Matos said he thinks “the No. 1 thing” people should understand is the migrant crisis in Europe is a lot different from the U.S. and added America only lets in around 1 percent of refugees

recommended to them.

“We are interested in actually helping Syrian refugees. We think that it would be a good thing if Aiken could welcome and help Syrian refugees in any way possible,” Matos said. “We want Aiken (County) Council to know that there are people on the other side of this. We shouldn’t be turning our backs on the most vulnerable people.”

Equally disappointed in Haley’s letter, he said the group feels county council’s resolution has a “partisanship, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment.”

**Christina Cleveland** is a general assignment reporter at the Aiken Standard. Follow her on Twitter at @ChristinaNCleve.

**Dan Brown** contributed to this story.

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AP PHOTO/DAVID J. PHILLIP

Jane Malin holds a sign as she waves to passing cars during a rally to show support for Muslim members of the community near the Clear Lake Islamic Center in Webster, Texas on Friday. A group in Aiken will hold a candlelight vigil in support of Syrian refugees on Tuesday.