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To:
Date: 4/15/2016 8:20:52 AM
Subject: Clips – Friday, April 15, 2016

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General Assembly:

Post and Courier: Palmetto Sunrise: Bill giving stiffer penalties for assaulting an officer dies in committee

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160415/PC1603/160419563>

Maya T. Prabhu

A bill that would have increased the degree of offense and penalty for assaulting a law enforcement officer is dead for the year. Sen. Tom Alexander, R-Walhalla, introduced the bill at the beginning of the 2015 session as a way to give greater protection to police officer, corrections officer, emergency medical service provider, or firefighter. "It's really designed for first responders and detention officials to make sure that their safety and well-being is certainly provided for and that there's a mechanism that if it's violated that there are consequences to that action," Alexander said. The bill was scheduled to be discussed this week in the Senate Judiciary Committee, but instead was sent back to the subcommittee, which is chaired by Sen. Brad Hutto, D-Orangeburg. Hutto said there are too many other big issues, including ethics, roads and the state's budget, that there will be no way to get to Alexander's bill this session.

Post and Courier: Ethics reform bills stall in the Senate

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160414/PC1603/160419578>

Maya T. Prabhu

Senators attempted, and failed, to move two ethics bills forward Thursday before cutting their floor debate short and heading to meetings to deal with the state's budget. Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman was unsuccessful in getting senators to move a bill regulating funds spent by outside groups on campaign materials — also known as "dark money" — into a priority spot for debate. The move required two-thirds of the Senate's 46 senators to vote in favor of the motion. It failed 26-16. "I think you heard me earlier this week from the podium talk about I'm going to do everything in my power every chance I get to pass the dark money bill," said Leatherman, R-Florence. "What I see is the dark money wants to pour money into this state, into the House and into the Senate, back to the person that they think they can control after they get them elected, pure and simple." Senators seemed to pick up steam this week after a four-year quest to pass ethics reform. On Wednesday they gave second reading to a bill that will require public officials to disclose private sources of income.

Independent Mail: Political Pulse: Bryant helps block 'dark money' disclosure bill

<http://www.independentmail.com/news/political-pulse-bryant-helps-block-dark-money-disclosure-bill-307868cd-5d02-12a0-e053-0100007ff971-375787301.html>

Sen. Kevin Bryant helped block consideration of a bill Thursday that would require independent political committees to disclose their expenditures and top donors. Bryant, a Republican from Anderson, contends that the disclosure rules would infringe on the First Amendment rights of these groups. He was one of 16 senators who voted against a motion to take up the disclosure bill. A total

of 28 senators voted for the motion, short of two-thirds majority needed for approval. "We are privileged to live in a free society where people who live in South Carolina, people who live in the United States of America, have the freedom to criticize their elected officials," Bryant said on the floor of the Senate. "I believe we ought to be grateful for the First Amendment." But Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman was against the blocking of the bill.

Independent Mail: Anderson legislator says he's learned lesson after disparaging remarks about DOT

<http://www.independentmail.com/news/anderson-legislator-maligns-dot-says-hes-learned-lesson-307868cd-5d01-12a0-e053-0100007ff971-375769521.html>

Kirk Brown

One day after falsely accusing the South Carolina Department of Transportation of mishandling an Oconee County bridge project, state Rep. Jonathon Hill said Thursday that he has learned a lesson. "You live and learn," Hill said. "I try to learn from my mistakes." Hill said Wednesday that his "jaw dropped" after a constituent told him that the roads agency mistakenly "tore down a perfectly good bridge." The first-term Republican from Townville made his comments on the floor of the state House of Representatives during the debate over a roads bill. Tim Callenback, resident construction engineer for the Department of Transportation in Pickens County, said Thursday that Hill is mistaken. "We fixed the right bridge," Callenback said. "There is no guessing about that."

Sen. Lee Bright's 'Bathroom Bill':

Associated Press: Laws decried as LGBT discrimination proposed across country

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=8LOz3skJ

SC State Wire

Legislation has been proposed in states across the country to protect those who - due to religious beliefs - decline to employ or serve certain people. Critics say the laws are aimed at the LGBT community and are discriminatory. Recent laws denounced as discriminatory in North Carolina and Mississippi has prompted a growing backlash from opponents. Here's a look at legislation around the country... Transgender people told a Senate panel Thursday they fear a South Carolina bill that would require them to use the public bathroom for their biological sex will stoke misguided fears and endorse restroom vigilantism, even if the bill dies as expected. No vote was taken in the panel's second and final hearing. Whether the full committee will take it up is unclear. But even if it manages to advance to the Senate floor, opposing Sen. Joel Lourie promises to use Senate rules to block debate. House GOP leaders say they won't deal with it before the session ends in June anyway. Republican Gov. Nikki Haley opposes is at unnecessary.

Associated Press: Transgender advocates fear bill's fallout even if it dies

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=yfCmsxBp

Seanna Adcox

Transgender people said Thursday they fear a South Carolina bill that would require them to use the public bathroom for their biological sex will stoke misguided fears and endorse restroom vigilantism, even if the bill ultimately dies as expected. Opponents told a Senate panel the unenforceable measure perpetuates myths against an already-ostracized community, while supporters contend it's about protecting the privacy and safety of women and children. The measure mimics part of a North Carolina law passed last month that's caused economic fallout and debate nationwide. A growing number of musicians have canceled concerts in North Carolina in protest, including Cyndi Lauper, Bruce Springsteen and Ringo Starr. In Massachusetts on Thursday, an LGBT group booed the

Republican governor off stage when he declined to commit to legislation expanding protections for transgender people. The South Carolina bill, introduced last week, may go nowhere.

Post and Courier: Future of S.C. transgender bathroom bill unclear

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160414/PC1603/160419594>

Maya T. Prabhu

A Columbia senator all but guaranteed the death of a bill that would require transgender people to use the bathroom that matches the gender on their birth certificate. "I would like to bring it to the full committee and dispose of it right away," Sen. Joel Lourie, a Democrat, said during a second hearing Thursday on the measure. "I am going to do everything procedurally possible to ensure that this bill does not pass this year." The bill's sponsor, Republican Sen. Lee Bright of Roebuck, has said previously that the bill is about the safety of women in restrooms where men could cause them harm. More than 20 people, both in support of and against the bill, spoke during a more-than-two-hour hearing Thursday afternoon. The bill also would ban municipalities from passing laws expanding the use of gender-designated public restrooms to transgender people.

The State: SC transgender bathroom bill will not pass, Richland Democrat vows

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article71942187.html>

Cassie Cope

A proposal to ban transgender people from choosing the bathroom that they use is headed to a S.C. Senate committee vote after a panel hearing from supporters and opponents wrapped up its second day of hearings Thursday. However, a Democratic member of the Senate General Committee promised to block the proposal. "This bill will not pass the South Carolina General Assembly this year," state Sen. Joel Lourie, D-Richland, said after hearing testimony that included personal stories from transgender men and women and religious opponents and supporters of the proposal. Republican Gov. Nikki Haley has said the proposal, sponsored by state Sen. Lee Bright, R-Spartanburg, is not needed.

Greenville News: Senator vows to kill transgender bill

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/politics/2016/04/14/senator-vows-kill-transgender-bill/83039220/>

Tim Smith

A senator opposed to a bill regulating the transgender use of public bathrooms said Thursday that if it survives a committee vote, he and another senator will move to block it from being considered on the Senate floor, meaning "it's pretty much dead for the year." Sen. Joel Lourie, a Columbia Democrat, made his comments at the start of the second public hearing about the bill, which is scheduled to be considered by the full Senate General Committee, possibly as early as next week. Lourie and Sen. Lee Bright, a Spartanburg County Republican and author of the bill, made up the panel hearing testimony on the legislation. The bill would bar people from using public bathrooms, changing rooms and locker rooms that do not correspond with their biological sex and prevent local governments from passing legislation allowing such use.

Wilson-Pascoe Dispute:

The State: Wilson-Pascoe dispute is public, SC Supreme Court says

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article71957267.html#storylink=apmobile>

John Monk

The S.C. Supreme Court issued a two-pronged order on Thursday, making records public in the historic legal battle between special prosecutor David Pascoe and Attorney General Alan Wilson and also saying it will take up the case immediately. In legal language, the high court said it would hear the case in "original jurisdiction," which means that Pascoe and Wilson will not have their case kicked back to a lower court — an action that could trigger a long trial process followed by lengthy appeals that could take months or even years.

The State: SC lawmakers say SLED report clears them

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article71932802.html#storylink=apmobile>

Andy Shain

Two top S.C. lawmakers named in secret portions of a SLED report about possible State House corruption said Thursday that report shows they broke no laws in steering political work to their businesses. "Sorry, it's not sexy guys," state Rep. Jim Merrill, R-Berkeley, told reporters. "I'm sorry nobody is stealing money or embezzling money or shifting grants to somewhere or public corruption. But it ain't there. ... Well, I'm not sorry. I'm very pleased." In other developments Thursday tied to the State House investigation...

Greenville News: Upstate lawmakers deny ethics wrongdoing

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/politics/2016/04/14/upstate-lawmakers-deny-ethics-wrongdoing/83030898/>

Tim Smith

Ethics issues permeated the Statehouse Thursday as House lawmakers mentioned in a State Law Enforcement Division report on possible ethics violations denied any wrongdoing while the Senate defeated a move to consider a bill aimed at ridding the state of so-called dark money in campaigns. The Legislature has for years debated ethics reform and the House has passed numerous bills only to see most of them sit on the Senate calendar. The bills are the first significant ethics reform since the days following a federal corruption sting that resulted in convictions of state lawmakers two decades ago. Ironically, the Senate this week finally passed one of the bills, to require public officials including legislators to report all sources of income, as a report surfaced of another criminal ethics probe, this time by the State Law Enforcement Division.

Savannah River Site News:

Aiken Standard: Bill headed to full U.S. Senate would reduce MOX funding

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160415/AIK0101/160419697>

Dede Biles

The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee on Thursday unanimously approved a measure that would reduce funding for the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility that is being constructed at the Savannah River Site. That action cleared the way for the \$37.5-billion Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2017 to be considered by the full U.S. Senate. If passed in its current form, the measure would provide \$270 million for MOX, which received \$340 million from the federal government for fiscal year 2016. The \$270 million is the same figure recommended earlier this year by President Barack Obama, who wants to pull the plug on MOX and pursue another method, downblending, to deal with excess weapons-grade plutonium. "If the Obama Administration thinks they are going to cancel the MOX program and not have a viable path forward, they're in for a rude awakening," Graham said.

South Carolina News:

The State: Tiffany Mitchell picked ninth overall in WNBA Draft

<http://www.thestate.com/sports/college/university-of-south-carolina/usc-womens-basketball/article71932837.html>

David Cloninger

Tiffany Mitchell is headed to Indianapolis after all. The Indiana Fever selected South Carolina's three-time All-American with the ninth pick in Thursday's WNBA Draft, providing the trip that Mitchell always thought she'd take in 2016. The site of the women's Final Four, Mitchell and her teammates were denied the journey after a stunning upset in the Sweet 16, but at least one of the Gamecocks will be going – and staying for a while. "I'm just really happy, excited ... I don't think it's completely hit me," Mitchell said. "I'm just enjoying it right now." The Fever play in Bankers Life Fieldhouse, where Connecticut clinched its fourth straight national championship over Syracuse a week after the Orange beat the Gamecocks. The national finalists were the only two teams to beat USC last year – something that's still on Mitchell's mind.

Post and Courier: Donald, Grace share 1st-round lead at RBC Heritage

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160414/PC20/160419579>

Missing the Masters made Luke Donald's blood boil. The former world No. 1 channeled that anger to shoot his best round since January, a 5-under 66 at the RBC Heritage that left the Englishman tied with Branden Grace for the first-round lead Thursday. The two were a stroke ahead of four players, including the world's current top-ranked player in Jason Day. Day caught Donald and Grace at the top heading to Harbour Town Golf Links' closing, lighthouse hole. But he took an unplayable lie in a bunker when his ball bored into the sand and made his lone bogey to fall back. Donald had been a major tournament mainstay since first playing Augusta National in 2005. However, he has fallen badly the past couple of seasons (he's 95th in the world ranking) and was forced to watch the Masters at home instead of playing for a green jacket.

Local News:

The State: Baseball fans find good value in Fireflies opening night

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article71981032.html>

Avery Wilks

The Columbia Fireflies' opening night was a blast for 6-year-old Landon Nieto and 9-year-old Hayden Geib, even if the cousins spent most of the game playing on a grassy berm just beyond the stadium's right field wall. It was just as fun for Landon's parents, who could take the kids along for opening night at Spirit Communications Park without breaking the bank. "There's nothing better than being out in fresh air, with baseball and fireworks," Tammy Nieto, Landon's mother, said as a Fireflies staffer handed free T-shirts to kids nearby. "That's a nice feature." Tammy Nieto guessed the Chapin residents would spend about \$50 for a night at the ballpark.

The State: Men in high heels draw attention to sexual assault

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article71938402.html>

Everyone, including the men, put on heels for Thursday's Walk a Mile in Their Shoes event in Columbia's Vista. The event, sponsored by Sexual Trauma Services of the Midlands, is held to draw attention to sexual assault awareness and prevention.

The Herald: Clowney asks judge for bond for father charged in Rock Hill strip club shooting

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/crime/article71941377.html>

Teddy Kulmala

Appearing at a court proceeding for the first time since his father's arrest last year for a shooting at a Rock Hill strip club, NFL player and new dad Jadeveon Clowney asked a judge to grant bond for David "Chilli Bean" Morgan so Morgan could meet his grandson. Clowney, a linebacker with the NFL's Houston Texans, was one of two family members to speak on behalf of Morgan during Thursday's bond hearing at the Moss Justice Center, the other being Morgan's sister. Morgan, 45, is accused of shooting at two people at a Rock Hill strip club on Aug. 4. He was shot in the shoulder while exchanging gunfire with one of the victims and has remained jailed since the shooting on attempted murder and weapons charges. "I think he's been doing pretty good," Clowney said in court, adding that he hasn't seen his dad "in a while."

Post and Courier: Group rallies for peace where North Charleston man died after shooting

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160414/PC16/160419567>

Melissa Boughton

Zola Myers stood just a few feet Thursday night from where her son was killed March 30 in North Charleston and called for an end to the violence. She was one of several people affected by gun violence who gathered at a candlelight and prayer vigil on James Bell Drive in Ferndale. "We really need to stop the killing," she said. "Nobody knows the pain that we share." Police say Leandra Lamont Bright, 30, of Gwinnett Street fatally shot Arthur Lee Myers during an argument on Taylor Street around 2 a.m. Wednesday. Myers died in his SUV after crashing through a wall of the U-R Nex Barber Shop building near Rivers Avenue. A least 15 people attended the vigil, held in the paved area between the barbershop and Tires for Hire. Myers said she was thankful everyone cared enough to rally for peace after what happened to her son.

Herald-Journal: Gaffney sued in fatal police chase

<http://www.goupstate.com/article/20160414/news/160419792>

Daniel J. Gross

The family of a woman killed in a police pursuit in Cherokee County is suing the city of Gaffney. Lori Michelle Walker, 38, died May 8, 2015, after a chase involving a motorcycle and a Gaffney police officer. Walker was riding on the back of the motorcycle behind Roger Kirby, 29, who was driving. Kirby died from his injuries several days later. Spartanburg-based attorney Pat Knie, who is representing Walker's family, said the police pursuit was dangerous and should never have taken place. He said police stated they had spotted the motorcycle driving erratically, and engaged in a pursuit. Knie said the circumstances didn't warrant a chase.

Aiken Standard: Leader of Aiken NAACP expresses concern about sentence for ex-N.A. officer

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160414/AIK0101/160419676>

Dede Biles

The president of the Aiken County Chapter of the NAACP expressed dismay and concern about a judge's recent decision to sentence a white former police officer to probation in the killing of a black motorist. Philip Howell also urged law enforcement officials in South Carolina to take steps to prevent incidents involving police officers and minority subjects that might be racially motivated from occurring. "Anyone looking at South Carolina these days might truly say, 'Well, black lives don't really matter, do they?'" Howell told the Aiken Standard. "Black men remain an endangered species in South Carolina. They can be hunted down and killed with impunity. It's no wonder our young people have no respect for law enforcement and the judiciary system." On Monday, former North Augusta Department of Public Safety officer Justin Craven pleaded guilty to official misconduct in office for his

role in the February 2014 shooting death of 68-year-old Edgefield County resident Ernest Satterwhite Sr. Judge Frank Addy sentenced Craven on the misdemeanor charge to three years probation with 180 hours of public service.

Aiken Standard: FBI in contact with Aiken authorities following 2014 search complaints

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160414/AIK0101/160419677>

Maayan Schechter

Aiken city leaders this week confirmed the FBI and a second external investigator will look into illegal search complaints made by an Aiken County couple that stem from an October 2014 traffic stop. On Thursday, Aiken City Manager John Klimm said the City sought the help of the FBI Columbia division, which has since been in contact with Aiken authorities and is looking into complaints made against four Aiken police officers – Chris Medlin, Penny Shultz, Clark Smith and Brian Hall – who are now at the center of a federal lawsuit filed in November. Three of the four officers have since been placed on "temporary reassignment." Smith retired from the Aiken Department of Public Safety in 2015.

Greenville News: Five Clemson protesters released

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/local/2016/04/14/five-clemson-students-refuse-leave-protest-sykes-hall/83051490/>

Ron Barnett

They called them the "Clemson Five." Five students who refused to leave Sikes Hall after an all night sit-in to protest what they perceive as the administration's lack of progress on improving racial inclusion on campus were given trespass notices and set free,, to the cheers of about 200 of their fellow students who had waited outside the building for more than two hours. They were charged with "refusing to leave certain public premises during hours when they are regularly closed," according to a university police report. They emerged from the administration building saying they do not plan to leave until they have seen an adequate response from the administration to their demands of greater inclusion and increased diversity on campus.

The State: The Citadel considers first-ever uniform exception: allowing a Muslim hijab

<http://www.thestate.com/news/state/south-carolina/article71947177.html#storylink=apmobile>

The Citadel is considering a request from an admitted student that she be allowed to wear a hijab in keeping with her Muslim faith, a move that would be an unprecedented exception to the school's longstanding uniform requirements. If the request for the traditional Muslim hair covering is granted, it apparently would be the first exception made to the Citadel's uniform, which all cadets at the storied public military college in South Carolina are required to wear at nearly all times. (At beaches, for example, college rules stipulate that, "Cadets will change into appropriate swimwear upon arrival and change back into uniform when departing.") A spokeswoman said that to her knowledge, in its nearly 175-year history, the school has never granted a religious, or other, accommodation that resulted in a change to the uniform.

The State: Former Sheriff Metts released from prison, is back at Lexington County home

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article71878807.html>

John Monk

Former Lexington County sheriff James Metts has been released from federal prison and is now back at his home. Metts, 69, was not supposed to be released until May, but it is not unusual for inmates with good records to be released a little early. For the time being, he is on home confinement and considered a federal inmate, one of his lawyers, Sherri Lydon, said Thursday. Metts was sentenced to Butner federal prison complex by U.S. Judge Terry Wooten in North Carolina last April after

pleading guilty to one felony charge of conspiring to harbor illegal immigrants. The charge had to do with letting illegal Mexican immigrants out of his jail. Metts reported to prison last June 18 to begin serving a 10-month prison. At the time Metts was indicted, in June 2014, he had served 42 years as sheriff and was the state's longest-serving sheriff.

Greenville News: Simpsonville Mayor: Grounsell has my support

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/local/golden-strip/2016/04/14/simpsonville-mayor-grounsell-has-my-support/83050234/>

Nathaniel Cary

Despite voting to suspend Simpsonville Police Chief Keith Grounsell, Simpsonville Mayor Janice Curtis told The Greenville News that Grounsell has her support and has a future with the city. "At the end of this suspension, he's got a job," Curtis said. "He's got a future with Simpsonville." Grounsell was suspended from his job as police chief initially on April 1 for what the city stated was misconduct with a citizen. The council then voted unanimously April 4 on a vague motion that turned out to be a 30-day suspension without pay. After The News pointed out potential open meetings law violations, the council voted again, this time 4-3, on April 12 to reaffirm Grounsell's suspension.

Greenville News: Simpsonville's saga plays out like a soap opera

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/2016/04/14/simpsonvilles-saga-plays-out-like-soap-opera/83029270/>

Elizabeth Sanders

What is going on in Simpsonville? For years now The Greenville News has covered friction between the mayor, City Council, a suspended police chief and a bunch of disgruntled citizens in Simpsonville. This week has been no different. We've learned Mayor Janice Curtis is accused of leaving a bullying voicemail for a former friend and colleague who happens to support Police Chief Keith Grounsell. In the voicemails, she used a derogatory term to bolster a threat against Michelle LaStringer, who owns the rights to the Miss Golden Strip, Miss Fountain Inn and Miss Mauldin pageants. The two were once friends who knew each other on the pageant circuit. The mayor's drama comes two years to the week after Mayor Perry Eichor was arrested on charges that he tried to manipulate a judge. He was later found guilty of misconduct in office and obstruction of justice and sentenced to probation.

Sun News: Parent company of Founders Group International accused of fraud in China

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/business/article71915482.html>

Alan Blondin

The China-based company behind the purchases of 22 Grand Strand golf courses, several golf-related businesses and multiple other properties in the area is allegedly being investigated by authorities in China for possible fraud, according to several reports in Chinese publications and business websites. The articles claim the alleged fraudulent business practices of Yiqian Funding involve U.S. golf course purchases and include a Ponzi Scheme, shell companies and internet fraud, and that at least two business offices in China have been raided and some company assets have been frozen. The company has denied wrongdoing in a statement posted on its website, in which it urged its employees to not believe the false accusations. Yiqian is the parent company in China of Founders Group International (FGI), which is operating its Myrtle Beach golf properties. Dan Liu is the president of Yiqian Funding and his partner in FGI, Xian "Nick" Dou, is the president of FGI. Both Liu and Dou, who has lived in New York for many years, now have residences in Myrtle Beach.

Sun News: Beach hazard statement issued for coastal Horry, Georgetown, Brunswick, N.C.

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/local/article71991687.html>

Elizabeth Townsend

A beach hazard statement, warning beach goers about strong wind gusts and longshore currents, has been issued Friday by the National Weather Service in Wilmington, N.C. for coastal Horry, Georgetown, and Brunswick County, N.C. The hazard statement is in effect through Friday evening, weather authorities said. Winds are expected to increase to 20 to 25 mph with occasional higher gusts and as a result a longshore current will develop, according to weather service officials. At Brunswick County, N.C. beaches the longshore current is said to be moderate from east to west. A longshore current is an ocean current that moves parallel to shore and can cause significant beach erosion.

National News:

Associated Press: New York delivers rowdy night of campaigning

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:43efff1353814247945aa2c8531d9335>

Julie Pace and Jonathan Lemire

Democrats brawled in Brooklyn while Republicans in black tie threw sharp elbows at a Manhattan gala in a rowdy New York night of politics ahead of the state's Tuesday presidential primary. As protests raged outside a state GOP dinner, Republican front-runner Donald Trump delivered an impassioned defense of the city he calls home. Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, meanwhile, aggressively challenged each other's judgment to be president at a raucous Democratic debate over Wall Street banks, minimum wage, gun control and foreign policy. The Democratic fight Thursday night came at a pivotal moment in the party's primary campaign, with Clinton leading in the delegate count but Sanders generating huge enthusiasm for his surprising candidacy. The debate also left no doubt that a rivalry that once centered on wonkish policy disagreements has turned strikingly personal.

Associated Press: Panel recommends parole for ex-Manson follower Van Houten

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:c11909b9460146e9b4c33e2ac18b0af4>

Amy Taxin

Leslie Van Houten stood before the California panel that would soon recommend her parole as a slight woman with shoulder-length gray hair, a wrinkled face and glasses, a far cry to from the rebellious teen she was when she joined the cult of Charles Manson more than 40 years ago and helped kill a wealthy grocer and his wife. At a five-hour hearing she described in detail how she descended from an idyllic childhood into psychedelic drug use and eventually found Manson, whom she described as a "Christ-like man that had all the answers" for an angry young girl whose parents' divorce had left her feeling abandoned and angry. On Thursday she convinced the state panel that the murderous young woman she'd been was a long-distant memory and that she was now fit to be paroled. She has completed college degrees and been a model inmate. "Your behavior in prison speaks for itself. Forty-six years and not a single serious rule violation," Commissioner Ali Zarrinnam told Van Houten at the close of her 20th parole hearing.

World News:

Associated Press: Belgian minister resigns after airport security criticized

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:fab94007b9134270882b25fceedc065ed>

Lorne Cook and John-Thor Dahlburg

Belgium's transport minister resigned Friday after a secret European Union report detailing lapses in airport security oversight was leaked in the wake of the deadly March 22 bombings at Brussels

Airport and subway. Prime Minister Charles Michel said after his talks with Transport Minister Jacqueline Galant, "the minister presented her resignation to the King and the King accepted it." Galant said the leak was part of a vendetta against her by a disgruntled senior transport official and insisted that she always paid very close attention to security concerns. The confidential EU document from last year was made public by two Belgian opposition parties. It called the oversight of security measures at the nation's airports flawed and cited serious deficiencies in the way safety checks were managed.

Associated Press: Brazil top court rejects president's bid to stop impeachment

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:339d0fc237324224a2e09ea927894124>

Mauricio Savarese and Stan Lehman

Brazil's Supreme Court voted early Friday to reject a motion seeking to block an impeachment vote in the lower house of Congress against President Dilma Rousseff, sharply limiting the embattled leader's options to avoid a showdown with legislators who want to oust her. Rousseff has lost support of key allies this week and is now even closer to a major defeat that would weaken an already struggling administration dealing with problems on many fronts: the worst recession in decades, a sprawling scandal at state oil company Petrobras and an outbreak of the Zika virus, which can cause devastating birth defects. Justices voted 8-2 to deny Rousseff's appeal, saying it wasn't their role to get involved at this stage of the process, which the top legal official in Rousseff's government called "contaminated." The majority of judges argued the lower house's role in impeachment proceedings is to consider whether to accept accusations against Rousseff and if it does so, the Senate will have a trial to fully examine them.

Associated Press: Seoul, US say North Korean missile launch apparently failed

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:67c278f79593454e868ff3f707606ef3>

Foster Klug and Hyung-Jin Kim

A North Korea missile launch meant to celebrate its founder's birthday has apparently failed, South Korean and U.S. officials said Friday, an embarrassing setback in what was reportedly the inaugural test of a new, powerful mid-range missile. The U.S. and South Korean officials provided few details, including the type of missile. But South Korea's Yonhap news agency carried an unsourced report that a "Musudan" missile, which could one day be capable of reaching far-off U.S. military bases in Asia and the Pacific, exploded in the air a few seconds after liftoff. A U.S. official speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters told The Associated Press that it appeared to be a Musudan missile but no definitive conclusion had been reached. Despite the failure, the North has another Musudan loaded on a mobile launcher and Pyongyang will likely fire it, according to South Korean and U.S. authorities, Yonhap reported.

Associated Press: Japan earthquake: 'I thought I was going to die'

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:0aa594ea265d453cbc364da57d7e61e2>

Emily Wang

A still shocked resident from a town in southern Japan recounted his terror the previous night as he examined the damage Friday from a powerful earthquake that brought down buildings and left nine people dead. "It's as if all control was lost, I thought I was going to die and I couldn't bear it any longer," said Yuichiro Yoshikado, who was taking a bath in his apartment in the hardest-hit town of Mashiki. "I grabbed onto the sides of the bathtub, but the water in the tub, it was about 70 percent filled with water, was going like this," he said waving his arms, "and all the water splashed out." More than 100 aftershocks from Thursday night's magnitude-6.5 earthquake continued to rattle the region as businesses and residents got a fuller look at the widespread damage from the unusually strong

quake, which also injured about 800 people.

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