

Title: **'This is personal'**
 Author: BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN croidan@postandcourier.com
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'This is personal'

Gov. Haley conveys to S.C. panel urgency of domestic violence issue

BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN
 croidan@postandcourier.com

COLUMBIA — A panel appointed to change the culture of domestic violence in South Carolina was told by Gov. Nikki Haley to take the statewide epidemic personally.



Haley

The South Carolina Criminal Domestic Violence Task Force had its inaugural meeting Tuesday, a historic moment that Haley said eventually

would have a long-lasting effect on South Carolina.

"It's going to be a lot of work, but this will be incredibly fulfilling," Haley said. "This is personal. I want you to take it personal. I take it personal. If we fail, someone dies."

The panel's meeting comes within a week of two domestic violence murder-suicides in South Carolina. Last Thursday, Sunghee Kwon fatally shot her ex-husband, Raja Fayad, on the University of South Carolina campus where he was a professor, then killed herself with the last bullet in her gun. On Sunday, Wadmalaw Island resident Termaine Frasier shot and killed his partner, Kennetha LaBoard, and her mother, Althea Goss, before turning the

"If we are not talking out loud about it, we are denying something that is very real in South Carolina."

Gov. Nikki Haley

gun on himself.

Haley reiterated Tuesday that the task force, which includes about 40 victims' advocates, law enforcement officials and Supreme Court Chief Justice Jean Toal, will need to confront the culture that contributes to the state being among the deadliest in the nation for women at the hands of husbands and partners.

Haley encouraged the panel to find ways for the community to talk about domestic violence on a daily basis, to have victims feel more comfortable with coming forward. Everyone knows a victim, but no one talks about the issue, she said.

"What you hear is whispers," Haley said. "People whisper about domestic violence. They pray about it, but they don't talk about it. If we are not talking out loud about it, we are denying something that is very real in South Carolina."

Bryan Stirling — director of the Department of Corrections and a former prosecutor — said one of the aspects law enforcement can

Online



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look into is how it responds to cases of domestic violence.

As a member of the panel, he said he'd be looking into how law enforcement officers could benefit from training that helps them help a victim and how to defuse the situation.

"Sometimes, that's just (the victim's) normal life and they don't know any better," Stirling said. "It's a cycle that they saw growing up."

He added that he and Toal discussed how officers can also help the prosecution aspect of the case by learning how to gather strong evidence.

While the task force gathers data from throughout the state, the Legislature is also trying to strengthen the state's criminal domestic violence laws. The Senate was scheduled to discuss its bill Tuesday. Sen. Larry Martin, R-Pickens, has said that the task force's work will complement the General Assembly's determination to better protect abuse victims.

The bills in the Legislature and Haley's executive order that created the task force follow last year's "Till Death Do Us Part" series by The Post and Courier, which revealed that over the past decade, 300 women in the state were killed by their husbands and boyfriends.

The Associated Press contributed to this report. Reach **Cynthia Roldan** at 708-5891.



Title: **It's all gambling; only difference is flashing lights**
 Author:
 Size: 45.88 square inch
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It's all gambling; only difference is flashing lights

The Democrats said they would try to legalize casinos in the state this year and, oddly enough, those politicians actually kept their word.

Of course, they are on a fool's errand.

No way does South Carolina open the door to organized gambling. Never happen. Well, not counting the state lottery.

You have to assume Dems play the Powerball a lot, because they are clearly suckers for astronomical longshots. But they do have one little glimmer of hope.

See, the Republicans have to fix South Carolina's crumbling roads. That is imperative because nothing makes people madder than sitting in traffic and shelling out \$200 for front-end alignments.

And since the GOP controls everything in the state, they get all the blame. And as of today, the state has let \$40 billion in road repairs go untended.

So now everyone is all about the roads. They have convened committees, thrown out solutions. Trouble is, Gov. Nikki Haley and her Republican colleagues in the Legislature can't agree on how to pay for the work.

This may be because some of their ideas require folks to suspend mathematical logic nearly as much as gambling does.



BRIAN HICKS

And there's that glimmer of hope for the Dems.

Show us the lost money

Last month, Haley — who swore she wouldn't support a gas tax increase — proposed a gas tax increase to fix the roads.

In fairness, she would offset this tax increase by significantly cutting the state income tax, which would be a net tax cut for most people.

Some conservatives loved the idea (which is suspiciously similar to an idea first offered by Sen. Larry Grooms). Even that Grover guy gave his blessing. Although why anyone cares what someone from Sesame Street thinks is a mystery — but that's another column.

Republican lawmakers, however, hate the governor's idea. While Haley is correct that cutting the state income tax rate from 7 percent down to 5 percent would make South Carolina more competitive, legislators are the ones who will have to pay the bills long after she's gone.

See, the governor's tax cut would cost the state \$1.8 bil-

lion a year, which is 25 percent of the state-funded portion of the budget.

Even the most egregious political liars, who claim everything can be funded by cutting fat, can't whack 25 percent of the budget. The Republicans know this. They have been shredding it for the past decade to make up for a recession and their last ill-advised tax cut.

Haley claims the state can absorb that \$1.8 billion a year loss through growth. But in the past five years, tax collections have grown by just \$1.5 billion. Sure, she says, but things are going to pick up.

Yeah, blackjack offers better odds.

No sure bet

Casinos are inevitable.

South Carolina is one of only 10 states in the nation that doesn't have them. Even our spiritual sister states — Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi — got in on the action.

Granted, that's not a good argument for casinos, seeing as how those states still aren't exactly rocking the national averages.

But casino proponents say these businesses would bring in enough revenue to fix our pitiful roads. Pennsylvania takes in more than \$1 billion a year in taxes off casinos.

Now, South Carolina would have to be a little less mercenary to attract business, but

even half would give the Department of Transportation enough money to crank up the road graders and start laying asphalt. On paper it makes a lot of sense. The reason Republicans will ignore the idea — aside from the fact that it is a Democratic proposal — is family values.

They know Upstate conservatives would stone them for embracing such an evil vice ... probably while they are dropping their kids off around the corner at USC, which they attend on lottery scholarships.

But the fact is, the Legislature is going to have to do something. There are serious needs in the state and it takes money to take care of them. The politicians either have to raise taxes, let the state fall into the ocean, or find a new source of revenue.

Like casinos.

To see what the world looks like with casinos, just go hang out in Cherokee. Every day dozens of vans and buses filled with senior citizens pull up at Harrah's — all of them coming just to play the slot. Many of those mature gamblers are from South Carolina.

Lawmakers ought to drive up there and take a look before they say no to the Democrats.

They will find North Carolina roads are quite nice.

Reach **Brian Hicks** at bhicks@postandcourier.com.

Title: **2 plans to fix SC roads to be introduced**
 Author: By JEFFREY COLLINS The Associated Press
 Size: 31.77 square inch
 Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



2 plans to fix SC roads to be introduced

By JEFFREY COLLINS
 The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Legislation offering two different ways to raise more money for South Carolina roads will be introduced in the House this week, House Majority Leader Bruce Bannister said Tuesday.

The bills released today will include both Gov. Nikki Haley's plan to increase the state's gas tax by 10 cents and reduce income tax rates by 2 percentage points over 10 years and a special House committee's idea to cut the gas tax while adding a sales tax on fuel, Bannister said after House Republicans met behind closed doors for 90 minutes.

Both plans would raise an additional \$400 million a year for highways and bridges.

Haley was invited to the caucus meeting and promoted her plan for more than 30 minutes.



The Associated Press

Members of Americans for Prosperity listen as South Carolina Treasurer Curtis Loftis speaks at a Statehouse rally against raising the gas tax on Tuesday in Columbia. House leaders are still writing a bill to raise more money for South Carolina roads.

Bannister said she was received warmly. But he said members decided it was best to put both plans on the table. He had no prediction which one

might get more support.

"We'll see tomorrow what the sponsors look like," the Republican from Greenville said.

Bannister also said chances

are if any road funding bill makes it into law this year, it won't look anything like what is proposed Wednesday since the Senate has yet to weigh in.

Plenty of competing voices are calling for more money for roads. Business leaders want something done this year. Democrats don't like Haley's idea of linking the gas tax increase to an income tax reduction.

Conservatives rallied at the Statehouse Tuesday saying they can't support a gas tax increase.

Americans for Prosperity state director Dave Schwartz told a rally of about 70 people that potholes and crumbling bridges make it obvious roads need fixing, but his group can't be sure lawmakers will spend any extra money from a gas tax increase properly.

"We don't trust that the money is going to go a specific way," Schwartz said.

Title: **Don't tie gas tax hike to income tax reduction**

Author:

Size: 7.75 square inch

Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



Don't tie gas tax hike to income tax reduction

Why would a state income tax reduction for the richest of our citizens be a prerequisite for increasing the gas tax?

Gov. Nikki Haley demands this reduction or promises to veto a simple gas tax increase.

I believe Haley and the South Carolina legislature should begin to improve our infrastructure with the money she proposes to give to the wealthiest of our citizens.

Isn't it wonderful that our citizens can enjoy driving to work and church while still having some of the lowest wages in the country?

Isn't it also true that many travelers to Florida from New England and the Midwest help out by deferring their fuel purchases until they reach our wonderful state?

John R. Davenport
Okatie

Title: **Bannister: 2 plans to fix roads upcoming**
 Author: By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press
 Size: 28.36 square inch
 Greenwood, SC Circulation: 16494



■ TAX INCREASE

Bannister: 2 plans to fix roads upcoming

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See **HIGHWAYS**, page 4A

HIGHWAYS

Continued from 1A

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South Carolinians who don't earn enough to pay personal income tax.

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any extra money from a gas tax increase properly.

"We don't trust that the money is going to go a specific way," Schwartz said.

State Treasurer Curtis Loftis was at the rally and mocked a \$70 billion long-term DOT plan to spend about 4 percent of additional money on bike lanes and light rail while bringing South Carolina roads to good condition in 25 years.



**BRUCE
BANNISTER**

Title: **Haley: Task force's mission is urgent**
 Author: By SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
 Size: 45.88 square inch
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Haley: Task force's mission is urgent

By SEANNA ADCOX

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Gov. Nikki Haley told members of her domestic violence task force Tuesday to take the problem personally, saying if their effort fails, people die.

The Republican governor led the first meeting of the group she created last month to come up with recommendations for stemming South Carolina's generational cycles of domestic abuse.

She told more than 40 people gathered at the Department of Juvenile Justice that their task involves evaluating

how people respond to victims, not how the victim thinks.

"Part of changing the culture is to stop trying to figure out how the vic-

tim thinks. We're never going

to fully understand the victim because we don't live in their shoes," Haley said during the 30-minute meeting. "It's not about why; it's about our response."

The group's final report is not due until Dec. 31. But Haley laid out deadlines calling for interim reports due over four phases.

South Carolina has long ranked among the nation's worst states in violence against women.

"If you think you don't know anyone involved in a domestic violence situation, you're not being honest with yourself," Haley told the group. "We have no option to fail, because if we fail, someone dies."

The task force's members represent wide-ranging fields, including law enforcement, courts, churches, health care, social services and cosmetol-

ogy.

Domestic violence survivor Elizabeth Gray said she endured years of abuse from her ex-husband before getting away through the help of Sistercare in 2010. He was arrested just once — for breaking a restraining order — despite 13 police reports and more than 30 incidents, she said.

"There are a lot of cracks in the system," said the West Columbia mother of two, who's on the task force and hopes more survivors share their stories with the group. "It's very easy to get into an abusive relationship. It's very hard to get out."

See **PEP TALK**, page 4A

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NIKKI HALEY

Governor of South Carolina
to the domestic violence task force

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PEP TALK

Continued from 1A

Haley created the task force after legislators advanced their own proposals for curbing the problem. Haley reiterated her stance Tuesday that no legislation will solve it.

The Senate Judiciary Committee voted overwhelmingly last month to advance Chairman Larry Martin's bill to the Senate floor for debate. A House study committee, created last August, introduced its proposal last month. Both bills would create tiered penalties for abusers, giving prosecutors more options.

Martin's bill also seeks to prevent known abusers from having easy access to guns. He believes that's critical to reducing the state's

dismal death statistics, saying lawmakers have studied the issue to death over the last decade, and it's time to get serious.

Under Martin's proposal, an abuser could not possess a gun while under protective orders, and those convicted of domestic violence could not possess a gun for

a decade after their sentence is served. Some first-time offenders could undergo counseling to avoid that penalty.

The ban is already federal law, which would require federal prosecution. State and local law enforcement can't enforce it without a corresponding state law.

More than 36,000 people annually report a domestic violence incident to law enforcement agencies around South Carolina, according to the state attorney general's office.



**NIKKI
HALEY**

GOV. OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Title: **2 plans to fix roads coming to S.C. House**
 Author: By Jeffrey Collins Associated Press
 Size: 31.31 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



2 plans to fix roads coming to S.C. House

Diversity of voices protest proposals from all sides

By JEFFREY COLLINS
Associated Press

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State Treasurer Curtis Loftis was at the rally and mocked a \$70 billion long-term DOT plan to spend about 4 percent of additional money on bike lanes and light rail while bringing South Carolina roads to good condition in 25 years.

"We will worry about leisurely strolling down a bike path in 2040," Loftis said.

Part of the debate centers on how much extra money South Carolina roads need.

The DOT report cited by Loftis and approved by the DOT last year said the agency would need \$1.5 billion more per year to get the state roads in good condition by 2040. About \$3 billion of the \$70 billion plan dealt with bike paths and light rail. The DOT would spend about \$60 billion on roads if its plan is fully funded.

Recently, DOT Director Janet Oakley and the governor have suggested an extra \$400 million a year would be a first step to repair and maintain the state's most vital roads.

Title: **Haley urgent in taking on domestic violence**
 Author: By Seanna Adcox Associated Press
 Size: 33.32 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



Haley urgent in taking on domestic violence

Governor lays out deadlines for task force she created

By SEANNA ADCOX
 Associated Press

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the culture is to stop trying to figure out how the victim thinks. We're never going to fully understand the victim because we don't live in their shoes," Haley said during the 30-minute meeting. "It's not about why; it's about our response."

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SEE **TASK FORCE**, PAGE 6B

TASK FORCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

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Haley

Title: **Housepanel: Close S.C. State for 2 years**
 Author: By Andrew Shain ashain@thestate.com
 Size: 75.48 square inch
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House panel: Close S.C. State for 2 years

Students would get aid
to attend other schools

By ANDREW SHAIN
ashain@thestate.com

South Carolina State University would not hold classes or athletics events for the next two years under a plan approved by an S.C. House budget panel Tuesday.

The plan, meant to give the financially troubled school a "clean slate," calls for closing S.C. State in July and firing its trustees, administrators, faculty and staff.

The school would reopen under new leadership in the fall of 2017. The 3,000 students at the state's only historically black public college could get state scholarships to attend other South Carolina public colleges or any historically black university.

The Orangeburg school has a \$10 million deficit owed to food

and maintenance vendors. Its enrollment also has dropped by more than a third since 2007, and just 14 percent of its students graduate within four years.

"We are looking at a bankrupt institution," said state Rep. Jim Merrill, the Berkeley Republican who

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S.C. STATE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

heads the panel that recommended suspending operations at S.C. State. "No one takes any pleasure in recommending this."

High debt

The proposal approved Tuesday is a long shot to pass the Legislature.

Suspending operations at S.C. State would require the proposal to pass the full House and the state Senate, where the college has powerful advocates, including Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman.

The Florence Republican is the architect of an ongoing recovery plan for financially troubled S.C. State.

That plan included forming a panel of current and former South Carolina college presidents to advise the school.

That panel recommended a \$12 million bailout of the school, approved late last

year.

S.C. State also received a \$6 million loan from state budget leaders last year.

The House panel's proposal does not address how the state would cover the costs of closing S.C. State temporarily, including paying off an estimated \$100 million in bonded debt the school owes.

Leatherman, who also leads the budget-writing committee in the Senate, said Tuesday he was withholding judgment on the House proposal until he sees it.

But he wondered if some S.C. State students might be left without a new school if the Orangeburg school suspended its operations. Even with state scholarships, some students might not qualify academically for admission to other schools, he said.

Even if the proposal to suspend operations fails in the Legislature, S.C. State is being damaged by it, school

President Thomas Elzey said Tuesday.

"It's damaging our ability to attract students and damaging our ability to raise money," Elzey told The State. "It's creating a problem for the university in the message that it sends."

Boiling point

The plan put forth by the House panel that oversees state funding of public colleges shows the growing frustration with S.C. State in the General Assembly, said Merrill, the panel's chief.

House budget writers said they were frustrated the school sought \$6 million from lawmakers this year to pay off last year's \$6 million loan.

During a meeting with the panel last month, S.C. State leaders said they could not cut curriculum, faculty or athletics, Merrill said.

At that meeting, S.C. State administrators suggested \$50 million in new state

funding for the school over the next five years to improve its academic programs. The \$50 million request lacked specifics, sending panel members to a boiling point, Merrill said.

"There seems to be unwillingness to make the cuts that are necessary," he said.

The plan would close S.C. State for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years.

Students could get state-funded scholarships to attend other state public colleges or other historically black schools if they keep a 2.5 grade-point average, a mix of B's and C's.

The state would fire school administrators, trustees, faculty and staff under the proposal.

Some employees at the Orangeburg school could reapply for their jobs when the school reopened, said state Rep. Phillip Lowe, a Florence Republican on the panel.

The school employs about 1,000.

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 Author: By Andrew Shain ashain@thestate.com
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The state would assume responsibility for S.C. State's debt.

The proposal, known as a budget proviso, also would suspend the Bulldogs' athletics programs.

The panel of current and former state college presidents advising S.C. State would develop a plan to reopen the school by Jan. 1, 2017, and start the process of hiring new leadership and faculty.

S.C. State would hold classes again in fall 2017.

"Hopefully, the school has a clean slate," Merrill said. "It's not the intention of the committee to wipe S.C. State off the planet."

Accreditation issues

S.C. State's accreditation remains an issue whether or not the House plan moves forward.

The school's accreditation is on probation because of its financial, accounting and governance issues.

S.C. State would lose its accreditation if it closes for a year, said Belle Wheelan, president of the Southern As-

sociation of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

For S.C. State students, that could be a financial death blow. Students cannot receive financial aid at unaccredited schools.

Restoring accreditation after S.C. State reopened would take at least two years, Wheelan said.

The budget panel voted 3-1 to suspend operations at the school, a vote that broke along party lines. Republicans Merrill, Lowe and Garry Smith of Greenville favored the plan.

Democrat Gilda Cobb-Hunter of Orangeburg opposed the proposal, though she has agreed steps need to be taken to fix the college's budget.

Budget panel members said Elzey has not done enough to turn around the school's financial fortunes since he arrived in mid-2013 from The Citadel. He arrived in Orangeburg as lawmakers were replacing almost the entire S.C. State board of trustees.

S.C. State response

S.C. State's financial problems predate Elzey, stemming from the decisions by previous school leaders to borrow money to cover deficits for several years. Those deficits largely were the result of the school's failure to cut its costs to match falling enrollment and cuts in state aid.

Gov. Nikki Haley, who has opposed giving S.C. State more public money until it has a financial plan, understands the frustrations of lawmakers, her office said Tuesday.

Haley heads the Budget and Control Board that loaned S.C. State \$6 million last year.

She is awaiting a consultant's report on the school's finances ordered as part of the loan.

"S.C. State's leadership has been unable to provide straight answers on the condition of the school's finances for months, something she finds totally unacceptable," Haley spokeswoman Chaney Adams said.

Elzey drove to Columbia to

speak with lawmakers Tuesday after hearing about the vote.

Later, he held a news conference on the school's Orangeburg campus to provide assurances to students, staff and alumni.

The school tweeted from its official Twitter account the phone numbers of the S.C. House and governor's office, asking supporters to help fight the budget proposal.

"The university is encouraging all students, alumni, supporters and parents to remain calm," the school tweeted. "The proviso is simply a recommendation."

Proposal to suspend S.C. State

Under a budget proposal approved by an S.C. House panel Tuesday, the state would:

- Close S.C. State for the 2015-16 school year; there would be no classes or sports in 2016-17 either.
- Fire trustees, administrators, faculty and staff and halt athletics programs.
- Allow current students to get state scholarships to attend another S.C. public college or a historically black university.
- Assume the school's debt, more than \$100 million.
- Working with a panel of current and former college presidents that is advising S.C. State, develop a plan by Jan. 1, 2017, to reopen the school in the fall of 2017.



Title: **Study fuels state water war**
 Author: By SammyFretwell sfretwell@thestate.com
 Size: 49.75 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688

Study fuels state water war

**Clemson professor
says big ag makes
\$41.7B impact in S.C.**

By SAMMY FRETWELL
sfretwell@thestate.com

As a fight over water rights boils in the Legislature, boosters of large farm corporations released a study Tuesday showing that agribusinesses and forest corporations provide a \$41.7 billion impact on South Carolina's economy each year.

The study, prepared by Clemson University professor James London, was the centerpoint of an afternoon news conference featuring Gov. Nikki Haley, Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers and representatives of some of the state's most influential farming organizations.

Agriculture and forestry directly employ 109,141 people, but total employment is closer to 212,000 jobs when spinoff impacts are factored in, statistics show. In the past five years, the agribusiness industry, including forestry, has grown 23 percent in its economic impact on South Carolina, London's report said. Collectively, forestry and agriculture are the state's largest industry, officials said.

Weathers said he's recruiting more agribusinesses to locate in South Carolina,

which not only benefits from big farms but also from the packing businesses associated with them.

The release of the report comes as tensions continue between powerful agribusiness interests and rural landowners, including small farmers, who live in the Edisto River basin. Concerned about multibillion-gallon water withdrawals from a huge potato farm last year, many area residents today are fighting to crack down on large water usage by agribusinesses for irrigation.

Former state Rep. Tim Rogers, who heads the grassroots group Friends of the Edisto, said Tuesday's news conference appeared to be an effort to sway lawmakers against tightening the state's water law for big farms, which enjoy exemptions that other industries do not.

Rep. James Smith, D-Richland, is expected to introduce a bill Wednesday to more tightly regulate new mega-farms seeking to siphon rivers for irrigation. Sen. Chip Campsen, R-Charleston, already has filed

a similar bill.

River protection groups, environmental organizations and small landowners plan their own news conference Wednesday morning to support tighter water withdrawal laws for big farms. The Wednesday event is organized by SC Rivers Forever. The organization is a coalition of environmental groups, including the Conservation Voters of South Carolina, as well as landowners from the Edisto basin.

Rogers and Congaree Riverkeeper Bill Stangler said the impact of agribusinesses on the state's economy is impressive, but the environmental effects on rivers are a concern. Some waterways could be sucked dry without proper controls on agriculture, they say.

"Everyone wants to see our economy grow and the agriculture industry grow, but we want to make sure it doesn't damage the farmers who already are here," Stangler said, noting that South Carolina needs "to make sure withdrawals are compatible with other multibil-

lion-dollar industries in this state, like outdoor recreation and tourism."

South Carolina's existing water withdrawal law exempts big farms from many restrictions. Big farms, for instance, don't have to notify the public if they want to take

large quantities from rivers. Nor do they need permits and the more intense review required to get one. Many can simply register their plans with a limited review to begin pumping from rivers.

Weathers, the Palmetto Agribusiness Council and the state Farm Bureau do not favor tightening the state's 2010 water law without more study. They contend that the law is too new to change without more information. Haley did not offer her opinion at Tuesday's news conference.

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KIM KIM FOSTER-TOBIN - THE STATE

Crews work on the piping system necessary to siphon up to 9.6 billion gallons of water needed annually to irrigate an Edisto River potato farm.