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Governor Nikki Haley News:

The State: Flood-affected S.C. farmers say they are not feeling a recovery
<http://www.thestate.com/news/business/article49486535.html#storylink=cpy>
Roddie Burris

Several South Carolina farmers say recovery from the devastating October flood hasn't begun for many of them. Farmers face a triple threat that they say is peculiar to the Palmetto State because of the 22 inches of rains that fell on portions of the state over three days in early October.

Note: Haley sent a November letter to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack enumerating many of the concerns and issues outlined by S.C. farmers, and asked the department to expedite aid to the farmers. Haley also sent a letter to the S.C. congressional delegation, but noted that no farmer who was properly insured and viable before the flood should lose their businesses as a sole result of the flood.

Note: "The historic flood that hit South Carolina in October damaged businesses and homes across our state, and farmers were not spared," said Haley spokeswoman Chaney Adams, noting that farmers have access to federally subsidized crop insurance and lost revenue insurance.

Florence Morning News: Pee Dee Democrats, Republicans hold differing views on Trump's Muslim statements

http://www.scnow.com/news/local/article_c3a73af8-a12e-11e5-9679-8f11cb3689aa.html

Joshua Lloyd

At a campaign event in Mount Pleasant last Monday, New York businessman and 2016 GOP candidate Donald Trump called for a temporary shutdown of all Muslims entering the United States, causing widespread criticism from Republicans and Democrats alike.

State Leaders

Note: South Carolina Republican Gov. Nikki Haley also blasted Trump's proposal after his visit, calling his statements an "embarrassment" and "unconstitutional."

Note: "It's just an embarrassment to the Republican Party," Haley said during a news conference. "It's absolutely un-American. It's unconstitutional. It defies everything this country was based on, and it's just wrong."

The State: Protestors can't stop Trump's run through SC

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article49443355.html>

Andrew Shain

Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump, trying to solidify his lead in South Carolina, gave a crowd of more than 4,000 what they wanted on Saturday – promises to protect gun rights, better aid military veterans and overturn President Barack Obama's executive orders on immigration.

Note: But his large following has not stopped fellow Republicans from criticizing his latest proposal. Republican S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley called Trump's Muslim travel ban proposal "un-American" and damaging to the GOP. Some Trump supporters who came to the forum on Saturday think Haley should rethink her opinion.

S.C. General Assembly News:

The State: South Carolina set to replace ruined bridges

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/local/article49510905.html>

Cassie Cope

The bridge is one of 18 statewide that is being fast-tracked for replacement in the aftermath of the historic flooding that hit South Carolina in October. The cost of replacing the bridges is included in the \$137 million for road repairs the Transportation Department says it needs because of the flooding.

Note: Cromer expects lawmakers to agree to spend more on roads. Most likely, he said, legislators will agree to increase the gas tax, use some added state revenues on roads and pass an income tax cut, a priority of Gov. Nikki Haley, who could veto a proposal that she does not like.

The State: THE BUZZ: An early look at the some of the issues that SC lawmakers plan to push <http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article49433970.html#storylink=cpy>

Andrew Shain

Lawmakers finished pre-filing bills last week ahead of the session that starts Jan. 12, including legislation aimed at addressing October's historic rainstorm and June's mass shooting at Charleston's Emanuel AME Church. Legislators also introduced a few bills that might raise eyebrows.

Associated Press: A shorter legislative session gains support in Senate http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=zZRnSK25

Seanna Adcox

An effort to shorten South Carolina's January-to-June legislative session is gaining support in the Senate, where the idea has died repeatedly for two decades. A Senate panel has advanced two proposals that would shave a month off the Legislature's meeting days in the Statehouse, amending the House version that would shave two.

Anderson Independent: Bills would aid S.C. car dealers who charge closing fees <http://www.independentmail.com/news/bills-would-aid-car-dealers-who-charge-closing-fees-26b68657-88bc-11cd-e053-0100007fb056-361677421.html>

Kirk Brown

Two Republican Upstate legislators have proposed bills that would make it easier for car dealers to continue charging closing fees to customers. Sen. Larry Martin of Pickens and Rep. Bill Sandifer of Seneca introduced their measures after the South Carolina Supreme Court ruled last month that Hendrick Honda of Easley shouldn't have charged a \$299 closing fee when it sold a used car to a woman in 2006.

Post and Courier: Sanford spending Christmas in Argentina <http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151213/PC1603/151219831>

Schuyler Kropf

U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford, R-S.C., will be spending part of the holidays with his soul mate María Belén Chapur, The Washington Post gossip page reports.

From House speaker to Supreme Court? Not! A rumor has been passing among state lawmakers for weeks that House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Hartsville, wants to turn in his purple robe for a Supreme Court justice's black one. So, is Lucas looking to trade robes? "Absolutely not," he said. "I plan to be serving as speaker for a long time," Lucas said.

S.C. Republicans pro-pot but anti-gay rights: Last week's voter poll by Winthrop University provided a snapshot of South Carolina Republicans' thinking on a variety of issues — they support the use of medical marijuana, believe Christians are under attack and that gay rights have gone too far.

Getting tickets to Charleston's GOP presidential debate: Republicans are showing widespread interest in the Fox Business Network presidential primary debate being held Jan. 14 at the North Charleston Coliseum and Performing Arts Center.

S.C. Political News:

Greenville News: Rubio in Greenville: I'm more electable <http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/politics/2015/12/12/rubio-campaigns-furman-today/77108846/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin>

Rudolph Bell

Republican presidential candidate Marco Rubio, campaigning in Greenville Saturday, made the case that he's more likely to win the general election in November than his rivals for the GOP nomination. The Florida senator said average Americans who haven't voted with Republicans in the past will be able to relate to his life experience as the son of a bartender who struggled with student debt.

Associated Press: Trump: Roberts 'disgraceful' on high court; Thomas favorite http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=xscCVB9a

Bill Barrow

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts is "disgraceful" and a "disappointment" to conservatives, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said Saturday, while praising Associate Justice Clarence Thomas as his favorite member of the high court.

Aiken Standard: Trump promises Second Amendment protection, blasts Justice Roberts on health care vote

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20151212/AIK0101/151219838>

Maayan Schechter

While in Aiken on Saturday, presidential candidate Donald Trump reiterated his stance that if victims of recent terrorist attacks in California and Paris had been armed there would not have been as much carnage – vowing he would “totally protect” the Second Amendment if and when he becomes president.

Post and Courier: Donald Trump supporters split on possibility of third-party run

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151212/PC1603/151219762>

Maya T. Prabhu

Potential Donald Trump voters were torn over the possibility the Republican frontrunner might consider a third-party run in the presidential election next year. The billionaire real estate mogul recently said he had not ruled out running third-party, which goes against his Republican National Committee pledge to run only as a Republican.

Aiken Standard: Trump draws thousands to stop in Aiken

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20151212/AIK0101/151219846/trump-draws-thousands-to-stop-in-aiken>

GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump drew thousands to the USC Aiken Convocation Center on Saturday for a sit-down question and answer town hall with South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson. Saturday's town hall was the seventh in a series of statewide presidential forums and the first for Aiken.

Opinion / Editorial Roundup:

Spartanburg Herald Journal: Price tag to display flag is excessive

<http://www.goupstate.com/article/20151213/OPINION/151219961/1128?Title=Price-tag-to-display-flag-is-excessive>

Editorial

The Confederate flag, that highly divisive South Carolina relic, is in the news again. Just five months after the flag came down from its perch on the Statehouse grounds, it's back in the headlines, this time not over location but finances.

Post and Courier: Adjust body camera rules

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151213/PC1002/151219739>

Editorial

As more and more law enforcement officers throughout the state strap on body cameras to do their work, both the officers and the people with whom they interact are safer, and more accountable. People who disagree with an officer's version of an encounter can go to the videotape to be proved right — or wrong.

Post and Courier: Stop offshore seismic testing

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151213/PC1002/151219740>

Editorial

Supporters of offshore drilling generally contend that testing is a harmless first step to determine if there are enough oil and gas reserves to justify ending the moratorium on drilling off the Atlantic coast. But serious questions have been raised about whether the use of repeated seismic blasts is really safe for marine life, which constitute a natural and commercial resource.

The State: Let's focus on the big risks — and do something about them

<http://www.thestate.com/opinion/op-ed/article49284390.html#storylink=cpy>

Cindi Ross Scoppe

A FRIEND WAS wrestling with that little voice of concern about a business trip to New York in the midst of the media-induced uptick in terrorism terror when she came to her senses and concluded, “It's safer than driving on I-26 every day.”

Greenville News: Funding education is a key to future

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/12/13/funding-education-key-future/77059862/>

Curtis Loftis

A strong financial future for our children is crucial to achieving a strong South Carolina, and in today's world, a child's path to securing that financial health is most likely through a college education. Michael Ericson, author of a recent study conducted by LIMRA Secure Retirement Institute remarked that, "attending college has morphed from a privilege into a necessity for so many."

South Carolina News:

Post and Courier: Six months later, a different Bible study meets at Mother Emanuel

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151212/PC16/151219817>

Deanna Pan

She wanted to be part of something beautiful, so week after week, every Wednesday, Paula Hinton returned to Bible study at Emanuel AME Church. She arrived 10 minutes early last Wednesday with a burgundy leather Bible in her purse, her red hair pulled up in a loose bun. She hugged the Rev. Brenda Nelson before marvelling at the room.

Post and Courier: Citadel alumni disturbed by images of cadets in white hoods

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151213/PC16/151219811>

Paul Bowers

Observers from within The Citadel's alumni ranks and beyond were chilled last week by the specter of cadets at the military school wearing white, pointed hoods — a visual cue clearly taken, they say, from the Ku Klux Klan's reign of terror and not from Dickensian ghosts of Christmas past.

Post and Courier: S.C. threatens to sue over delayed plutonium processing

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151213/PC1603/151219843>

Gavin Jackson

South Carolina has put the federal government on notice that it could face a lawsuit and potentially up to \$100 million a year in fines if it doesn't meet goals for reprocessing weapons-grade plutonium being stored at an unfinished plant near Aiken.

Post and Courier: In court, two cases against Dylann Roof playing out at different pace

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151213/PC16/151219888>

Andrew Knapp

Not even Dylann Roof's defense attorneys deny that he carried out the attack that killed nine black parishioners at Emanuel AME Church. But it's up to South Carolina and federal courts to determine what the 21-year-old avowed white supremacist's punishment should be.

The State: Determined lawyer battles government over sick nuclear workers

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article49480550.html>

Sammy Fretwell

The small green building behind the business center on Montreat Road is quiet these days — except for the corner office with a lawyer's shingle hanging from a post. It's the domain of Bob Warren, a 71-year-old South Carolina native who almost went broke representing people sickened by radiation and chemicals at the Savannah River Site nuclear weapons plant.

Local News:

Post and Courier: Under Mayor Riley, a changed city by design

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151213/PC16/151219715>

Robert Behre

Among Charleston's architects and design staff, Mayor Joe Riley's attention to detail is the stuff of legend. Architect Joseph Schmidt, who worked closely with the mayor on City Hall's \$6.5 million renovation a few years ago, saw it firsthand.

Post and Courier: Tecklenburg joins crowd at Charleston mosque's open-house event

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151212/PC16/151219754>

Paul Bowers

In the wake of terrorist attacks and a national debate about allowing Muslims to enter the U.S., Charleston Mayor-elect John Tecklenburg joined a crowd of more than 100 people for a shared meal and conversation Saturday afternoon at the Central Mosque of Charleston.

Greenville News: Greenville deputy was speeding in fatal moped wreck

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/2015/12/12/greenville-county-deputy-charged-wreck-moped-phone/76914600/>

Romando Dixson

A Greenville County sheriff's deputy was suspended a week without pay and charged with driving too fast for conditions after an investigation concluded he was speeding when he struck a moped rider from behind in a fatal collision in June, The Greenville News has learned through public records requests.

National News:

Associated Press: Average gas price soon under \$2, lowest since recession

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

David Koenig

Gasoline is close to breaking below a key psychological barrier as drivers enjoy some of the cheapest pump prices since the recession. The nationwide average price of a gallon of regular Saturday was \$2.02, down 58 cents from this time last year, according to auto club AAA. Experts say it could drop below \$2 a gallon in the coming days.

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