

Title: **State jobless rate dips to 16-year low**
Author: AMANDA COYNE THE GREENVILLE NEWS
Size: 10.38 column inches
Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



State jobless rate dips to 16-year low

AMANDA COYNE

THE GREENVILLE NEWS

South Carolina's unemployment rate dropped to a new low of 4.4 percent in November, the seventh consecutive month of joblessness decline.

The unemployment rate in the Palmetto State is slightly lower than the national rate of 4.6 percent. The state's work force grew to 2.2 million, and the

number of people looking for work declined to about 10,200.

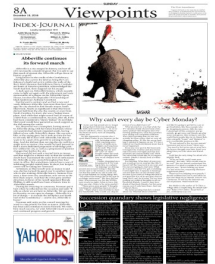
November's unemployment rate marked a nearly 16-year low, and a 0.3 percentage point drop from the previous month.

"We can also proudly say that more

South Carolinians are working than ever before in state history," said Gov. Nikki Haley in a statement Friday morning.

At the South Carolina Economic Outlook Conference last week, economists put forth a positive forecast for 2017, predicting that job growth would continue steadily around 2.5 percent.

Title: **Succession quandary shows legislative negligence**
 Author:
 Size: 35.65 column inches
 Greenwood, SC Circulation: 16494



Succession quandary shows legislative negligence

Did they even read the bill? The constitutional conundrum South Carolina will face if Gov. Nikki Haley is confirmed as U.N. ambassador is evidence of at least one thing: Its legislators take a casual approach to the rule of law.



**HANNAH
HILL**

GUEST
VIEW

How did we get to this point? The amendment to the constitution that voters approved in 2012 would have been enacted in 2018, but when the bill to ratify the amendment was filed in the Senate in 2013 it left out a key portion – which changed the effective date. Here is what happened:

— On Nov. 6, 2012 voters approved a constitutional amendment that would have enabled, among other things, the governor and lieutenant governor to run on the same ticket and the governor to appoint the lieutenant governor should the seat become vacant.

— On Feb. 27, 2013 a bill was introduced, by Sen. Shane Massey (R-Edgefield) that did not include an effective date for much of the bill – meaning it would become effective when the House and

Senate passed it.

— By May 29, 2014 the bill had passed both the Senate and House and was ratified with no amendment to insert the missing date. Since ratification triggered an effective date where not expressly stated a majority of the bill became effective on this date – which is almost two years before voters intended it to.

The bill passed the Senate Judiciary Committee, received two floor votes in the Senate, passed the House Judiciary Committee and received two floor votes in the House – with no amendment to correct the missing date. The fact that no one caught that error – presumably that no one actually read the bill that changed the constitution – is alarming enough.

But the consequences go much further. By a plain reading of the constitution, the whole amendment should be invalidated. There are no constitutional or statutory grounds for correcting errors in the constitution. Even the process for correcting errors in state code is limited to a brief 15-day window, after which any errors stand until legislatively corrected by the General Assembly.

If Haley resigns from office, as she is expected to do, who would become lieutenant governor when Henry McMaster steps into the governor's seat? Does the

legislature follow what the people voted on, or does it follow the current reading of the constitution? It's not within the purview of the General Assembly to adjudicate or fix constitutional questions. Only the courts can perform that role.

Still, the legislature might try. Media reports show that senators might simply follow the original language of the amendment, in spite of the fact that the constitution, as it reads now, demands something completely different. And lawmakers "fixing" the constitution on their own authority would set a dangerous precedent.

Lawmakers either made this change inadvertently, in which case they passed a constitutional amendment without bothering to read it, or someone altered a constitutional amendment after the people approved it. South Carolinians ought to be outraged by either scenario. And whatever happened, the state supreme court should rule on how to proceed – the court must decide either to make all the amended sections effective 2018 or invalidate the amendment and tell the legislature to start over.

Hannah Hill is a policy analyst at the South Carolina Policy Council.

Title: **Mulvaney to be named Trump's budget chief**
 Author: BY ANITAKUMAR akumar@mcclatchydc.com
 Size: 66.34 column inches
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM SC'S FIFTH DISTRICT

Mulvaney to be named Trump's budget chief

Announcement expected Monday, source says

BY ANITA KUMAR

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NEW YORK

President-elect Donald Trump will nominate U.S. Rep. Mick Mulvaney, R-Indian Land, to be director of the Office of Management and Budget, according to a senior transition official who has knowledge of the appointment but is not authorized to speak publicly.

The announcement is expected to be made by a statement Monday. Mulvaney would have to be confirmed by the Senate.

If confirmed, Mulvaney would be just the latest official in

Trump's inner circle with South Carolina ties.

Gov. Nikki Haley has been nominated to be U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. U.S. Sen.

Tim Scott, R-Charleston, and U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy, R-Spartanburg, recently were named as advisers to Trump's transition team.

Mulvaney had expressed an interest in running OMB when asked by a constituent on Facebook Oct. 19 where he would

SEE MULVANEY, 7A

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MULVANEY

like to serve in a hypothetical Trump cabinet.

"I would love to be the director of OMB," he wrote. "That is where I think REAL improvements could be made in how the government is run."

A fiscal conservative, Mulvaney is a co-founder of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, a group of about 40 lawmakers that helped push House

Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, to resign, and a member of the House Financial Services Committee.

Mulvaney was not an early Trump backer during the presidential campaign. He initially supported U.S. Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., for the Republican nomination. Mulvaney endorsed Trump in June, hours after House Speaker Paul

Ryan, R-Wis., did the same.

SPECIAL ELECTION?

Mulvaney, who has represented South Carolina's 5th District since 2011, won re-election in November after being challenged by Fran Persson, a former aide to Vice President Joe Biden.

If Mulvaney is confirmed, a special election will have to be held to fill

his congressional seat in a district that favors Republicans.

State Rep. Ralph Norman, R-York, said Friday he would run if a vacancy occurs. Norman ran for the seat in 2006, losing to then-U.S. Rep. John Spratt, a Democrat.

"This seat will be hotly contested and that's a good thing," Norman said, adding that gives voters a choice.

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 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

Other possible GOP candidates include former S.C. GOP chair Chad Connelly, and York County state Reps. Tommy Pope and Gary Simrill.

Connelly said Friday he has received calls from across the district, asking him to run. "We'll make a decision after Christmas."

S.C. House Speaker Pro Tempore Pope of York seemed less inclined to run, saying his focus continues to be on how he best can serve in South Carolina. "I do not anticipate that the Pope family would be going to Washington."

Simrill said he has been encouraged by many to run. "My family and I will be discussing this opportunity to determine where I can best serve the South Carolina citizens."

On the Democratic side, Person and state Rep. John King of Rock Hill said they are considering running. Person,

who lost to Mulvaney by 20 points in November, said he would begin to seriously consider running again after Christmas.

A spokesman for state Sen. Vincent Sheheen, another potential candidate, said the Kershaw County Democrat "is happy serving as a S.C. state senator." But, he added, Sheheen "will take some time to think things over the next few weeks."

A JOB FOR POLICY WONKS

Mulvaney traveled to Trump Tower in New York to meet with Trump last week. At the time, transition spokesman Jason Miller described Mulvaney as having "a very proven track record as a fiscal conservative and a government reformer."

Mulvaney declined to comment after the meeting. His office did not

respond Friday.

The OMB chief, often shorthanded as the budget director, will help Trump prepare his annual proposed budget. That could be crucial to Trump's policy initiatives, such as the repeal of the Affordable Care Act.

The budget director and the Office of Management and Budget also measure the performance of federal agencies. They also help set and enforce policies and practices governing the government's purchase of goods and services, called procurement. On a more mundane level, the office also oversees the performance review process for agencies and federal employees.

The job tends to be held by policy wonks, but some do gain fame or notoriety.

Ronald Reagan's budget chief David Stockman was an advocate for what became known as Rea-

ganomics and remains a public figure decades later. Like Mulvaney, Stockman was a congressman before becoming budget director.

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, whose views on cutting government spending are similar to Mulvaney's, left the U.S. House before taking the budget director's job under President George W. Bush. He later was elected to the Senate.

Leon Panetta, who ran OMB under President Bill Clinton, also had been a member of the House before accepting the position. He then was Clinton's chief of staff and later, under President Barack Obama, CIA director and secretary of defense.

Cassie Cope, Kevin G. Hall and Avery Wilks contributed.



Mulvaney

Title: **Mulvaney tapped for post in Trump administration**
 Author: BY EMMA DUMAIN The Post and Courier
 Size: 15.96 column inches
 Aiken, SC Circulation: 19635



Mulvaney tapped for post in Trump administration

BY EMMA DUMAIN
The Post and Courier

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A second South Carolina Republican has been selected to join President-elect Donald Trump's administration.

Just a few weeks after Gov. Nikki Haley was tapped to be U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, U.S. Rep. Mick Mulvaney is expected on Monday to be nominated to serve as director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The timing of the announcement was first reported by the McClatchy News Service. It was confirmed by *The Post and Courier* from a source in New York who is familiar with the transition team, which is based in Manhattan's Trump Tower.

Mulvaney was elected in November to a fourth term in Congress, overwhelmingly defeating Fran Person, a well-funded Democrat with backing of the national party and his former boss, Vice

President Joe Biden.

In October, Mulvaney expressed interest in the abstract in serving as director of the OMB, in which capacity he'd be responsible for administering the annual federal budget and overseeing the performances of government agencies.

"I would love to be the director of OMB," Mulvaney wrote at the time during a question-and-answer session with voters on Facebook. "That is where I think REAL improvements could be made in how the government is run."

Facebook has consistently been Mulvaney's main platform for sharing his thoughts, positions and photos of his garden with the public, often speaking out candidly on the news of the day. It might have been a sign that an announcement was coming when his campaign and congressional Facebook pages went offline, perhaps in preparation for the scrutiny to come in the confirmation process.

Title: **State Supreme Court asked to settle vacancy**
 Author: The Associated Press
 Size: 28.83 column inches
 Florence, SC Circulation: 35092



Lieutenant Governor

State Supreme Court asked to settle vacancy

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — A South Carolina senator wants the state Supreme Court to rule on whether Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster could pick his replacement if Gov.

Nikki Haley becomes President-elect Donald Trump's U.N. ambassador.

Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, asked the state's high court Monday to settle a discrepancy on whether a constitutional amendment changing the lines of succession is in effect. If it is, Senate President Pro Tem Hugh Leatherman could easily keep his powerful leadership post, as the Senate's leader would not be called on to fill the largely ceremonial position.

Regardless, Leatherman has refused to become lieutenant governor. His office had no immediate comment Monday.

Both a 2012 law that ap-

proved asking voters about the changes and the opening clause of the ballot question itself specified they were to begin "with the general election of 2018." But a law the Legislature passed in 2014 to ratify voters' approval created separate start dates for the various changes. While it changed the constitution to say candidates for governor and lieutenant governor will run on the same ticket beginning in 2018, it allowed a vacancy in the lieutenant governor's office to immediately be filled by the governor.

Davis argues that disregards both the 2012 law and voters' intentions.

"This goes to the very heart of constitutional governance," Davis writes in asking the justices to directly take the case. "The people clearly intended" for the changes to take effect after the November 2018 election.

He wants the high court to rule quickly.

The lieutenant governor's job will become open if the U.S. Senate confirms Trump's selection of Haley for U.N. ambassador, since McMaster would ascend to the governor's office. If McMaster can appoint his successor, Leatherman won't have to do anything to remain South Carolina's most powerful politician.

When former Lt. Gov. Ken Ard pleaded guilty to campaign violations in 2012, then-Senate President Pro Tem Glenn McConnell reluctantly resigned his Charleston seat of 32 years to fulfill what he called his constitutional duties.

But others haven't followed his example. When McConnell resigned as lieutenant governor in 2014 to become president of the College of Charleston, Sen. John Courson resigned as pro tem to avoid succeeding McConnell. Senators then chose Democratic Sen. Yancey McGill to momentarily become pro tem — just long enough to take the oath as lieutenant governor.



McMaster

Title: **United States Congress Authorizes Charleston Harbor Deepening**
 Author:
 Size: 28.67 column inches
 Dillon, SC Circulation: 5278



United States Congress Authorizes Charleston Harbor Deepening

CHARLESTON - December 10, 2016 - The United States Senate passed S.612, the Water Infrastructure Improvement for the Nation Act (WIIN), which included Congressional authorization for the 52-foot Charleston Harbor Deepening Project.

"The passage of WIIN marks one of the most significant milestones in the history of the Port of Charleston," said Jim Newsome, SCPA President and CEO. With this important step by Congress, we now turn our attention to inclusion in the President's FY2018 budget, relative to the construction phase of the harbor deepening project. By the end of the decade, we will achieve 52 feet of depth and Charleston will be the deepest harbor on the East Coast. This depth advantage will add significant capability in the fastest growing port region in the U.S., the Southeast. This is vitally important for significant long-term volume growth and the deployment of large container ships. We are extremely grateful to many for their tireless efforts ensuring this bill moves forward; the leadership in the U.S. Congress, specifically Chairman Inhofe of Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Chairman Shuster of House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the South Carolina Congressional Delegation, Governor Nikki Haley, and the South Carolina Legislature. We look forward to a continued, productive partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the Charleston Harbor Deepening Project progresses. Last but certainly not least I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our port staff and specifically Barbara Melvin, our Senior Vice President of Operations and Terminals, who guided this process for us from its inception in 2010 through this authorization."

The WIIN bill authorizes the Army Corps of Engineers Chief's Report for the construction phase of the Charleston Harbor Deepening Project, ensuring the project can remain on schedule. By achieving 52 feet of depth, SCPA will be able to accommodate fully-loaded new-Panamax container ships without tidal restriction.

"South Carolina, the Southeastern region and our nation will enjoy the positive impacts of the Charleston Harbor Deepening Project for years to come," said SCPA Board Chairman Pat McKinney. "Today's Congressional authorization is the result of years of hard work and dedication by the South Carolina Congressional Delegation, Governor Haley, our state, local and federal partners, and SCPA leadership. This world-class deepening project ensures SCPA will remain a competitive, growing port well into the future."

The Charleston Harbor Deepening Project was formally recommended for Congressional authorization in January with the issuance of the Record of Decision by the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works).

The project has moved expeditiously through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers SMART Planning process and received strong support by all levels of government. In 2012 the S.C. General Assembly set aside \$300 million for the state share of the project, and it was expedited by the Administration as a "We Can't Wait" initiative. Upon completion, the project will deepen the Charleston Harbor to 54 feet at the entrance channel and 52 feet in the harbor.

The WIIN Act, formerly known as the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), passed the Senate by a vote of 78-21 and the House by a vote of 360-61. It now moves to the President's desk for signature.

Title: **Welcome to Donald Trump's Bizarro World cabinet picks**
 Author:
 Size: 52.7 column inches
 Florence, SC Circulation: 35092



Welcome to Donald Trump's Bizarro World cabinet picks

As low as my expectations might be for the Donald Trump presidency, he finds new ways to drop the bar even lower.

Take his cabinet nominees. Please.

They aren't all bad. Retired Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis, the president-elect's choice for secretary of defense, comes well-recommended by old guard defense experts such as Sen. John McCain (R., Ariz.) and turns out to be nowhere near as nutty as his nickname implies.

And it's hard to dislike the bipartisan appeal of Gov. Nikki Haley, R-South Carolina, although Trump's choice to name her U.N. ambassador is a puzzlement. She has little experience in foreign relations, but she opposes President Obama's Iran nuclear deal, so maybe that's good enough for Trump.

But some of Trump's other choices illustrate how dramatically an election can swing our government's executive branch into a Bizarro World version of its former self — like the fictional planet in DC comics where everything is the reverse of life on Earth.

This is particularly true when government appointees don't seem to care very much for government.

For secretary of labor, Trump wants Andrew Puzder, a fast-food executive with a negative attitude toward additional overtime pay for workers and raising the minimum wage.

To head the Environmental Protection Agency, Trump proposes Scott Pruitt, Oklahoma's attorney general, a climate-change skeptic, who is currently engaged in the



ClarencePage
 Tribune Content Agency

latest in a series of lawsuits he's filed against the agency Trump would now like him to head.

And I can't leave out Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Alabama). Trump has tapped Sessions, a tough critic of the Voting Rights Act, to be attorney general, a move that, aided by a Republican Congress, puts him in an excellent position to launch a Reconstruction-style collapse of civil rights enforcement with the enthusiasm of a fox guarding a henhouse.

Still, the prizewinner for puzzling choices may well be Trump's naming of Dr. Ben Carson, his former rival for the Grand Old Party's presidential nomination, to be secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Sure, Carson is a nice guy with a great ghetto-to-Gold-Coast, pull-up-your-bootstraps narrative. The retired neurosurgeon has been the subject of best-selling books and a made-for-TV movie, "Gifted Hands," starring Cuba Gooding Jr. as Dr. Ben.

But what does he know about housing and urban development policy? Well, he owns a house and grew up in Detroit. Fine. But driving a car does now make you an auto mechanic.

HUD doesn't need a brain

surgeon. It needs people with good brains for housing and urban development. Carson's views on fighting poverty, expressed in his speeches and writings, leans heavily on quaint, old-fashioned, self-help values. Poverty, he once told a television interview in a much-replayed clip, "is really more of a choice than anything else."

That might be true for those of us who were born poor but fortunate enough to have resources at hand, such as a fully functional family and good schools. But what do you do for those who were not born so lucky?

Trump's urban "disaster" views sound frozen in the riot years of the '60s. Poverty fighters in both parties whom I have covered in recent decades have learned a lot of valuable lessons about what works and what doesn't in urban policy.

Sometimes the lessons have come with unintended consequences. For example, the demolition of Chicago's public housing high-rises restored peace to some violently troubled real estate. But it led to a dispersal of street gangs into some of the city's poorest neighborhoods — and one of the highest gun violence rates in the nation.

But there's enough good news in public-private partnerships, housing vouchers and other innovations to make many "inner-city" neighborhoods into oases of gentrification. To help those who have been left behind by these signs of urban hope, our nation needs wise leadership that doesn't require on-the-job training.

E-mail Clarence Page at cpage@tribune.com.

Title: **State economy strong, skills gap exists for jobs**
 Author: The Associated Press
 Size: 27.28 column inches
 Florence, SC Circulation: 35092



State economy strong, skills gap exists for jobs

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina will continue to enjoy solid job growth and rising incomes in the coming year, experts said Thursday, although employers are struggling to find qualified workers to fill new positions.

University of South Carolina economists Doug Woodward and Joseph Van Nessen warned that a "skills gap" must be addressed in order for economic growth to continue.

The economists said the job of closing a skills gap apparently will fall to incoming state chief, Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster, should Gov. Nikki Haley be confirmed by the Senate as President-elect Donald Trump's choice as United Nations ambassador.

"South Carolina's economy is growing at a healthy pace," Van Nessen said in the annual study. "And we expect the state to continue to build on this momen-

tum in 2017."

They issued their annual predictions for the state's economic outlook next year at the University of South Carolina. They both conduct research at the Darla Moore School of Business in Columbia.

Woodward and Van Nessen said they expect jobs to increase by 2.6 percent in the coming year, and most industry sectors will remain

strong. Manufacturing, professional and business services sectors registered the fastest growth during the past year, they said.

Woodward and Van Nessen say the state must address this critical skills gap that keeps many workers from being hired in order for state growth to continue.

The two pointed out that for the last several years, the state's rate of economic growth has

been accelerating, but in 2016 it leveled off and now is growing at a constant rate.

The labor market has strengthened considerably, they said, pointing to the unemployment rate at 4.7 percent, which they predict might drop to about 4.5 percent.

Personal incomes could grow at 4.8 percent during the coming year, which is comparable to the growth rate for 2016, the duo said.

"Although this is good news for workers, it also means that employers are struggling to find qualified employees to fill positions," they said.

The two cited strong job growth during the past year in the aerospace, automotive and tire manufacturing sectors. Construction has also played a key role in the economy's growth, in particular along the state's coastline, the study's co-authors said.

Title: **Mistrial in police shooting trial mystifies observers**
 Author: The Associated Press
 Size: 97.34 column inches
 Florence, SC Circulation: 35092



Mistrial in police shooting trial mystifies observers

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — The video was unambiguous: A white police officer fatally shot an unarmed black man in the back as the man ran away.

But a South Carolina jury was unable to agree on a verdict in one of the nation's ghastliest police shootings, with a lone holdout forcing a mistrial. The outcome stung many African-Americans and others. If that kind of evidence can't produce a conviction, they asked, what can?

"There's a jury full of people and they cannot decide if it's illegal to shoot someone who is running away from you?" said activist Johnetta Elzie, who is black. "What do you say about a country that feels this way about black people? If you can't see the humanity in that, I don't know what we're talking about anymore."

Prosecutors plan to retry officer Michael Slager, who is scheduled to be tried separately next year on federal charges that he violated Walter Scott's civil rights.

North Charleston city officials approved a \$6.5 million civil settlement for Scott's family earlier this year. Slager remains free on bail.

South Carolina Republican Gov. Nikki Haley voiced her support for Scott's family, saying in a statement that justice "is not always immediate, but we must all have faith that it will be served."

Scott, 50, was killed in April 2015 after he was shot five times. A barber on his way to work recorded the slaying on his cellphone.

The panel of 11 white jurors and one black juror deliberated for 22 hours. At one point, a juror sent a letter directly to

the judge saying he could not "with good conscience approve a guilty verdict" and that he was unlikely to change his mind. As they weighed their decision, jurors also asked the judge to explain the legal difference between fear and passion and inquired whether the self-defense standard was the same for officers as ordinary citizens.

NAACP President Cornell Brooks called the jury's decision "a disappointing delay in the delivery of justice." Hours after the mistrial, a tweet from three Black Lives Matter co-founders said, "Some days the hashtag is too painful to participate in."

Elzie, one of the first protesters in Ferguson, Missouri, after the fatal 2014 shooting of Michael Brown by a white officer, said word of the hung jury left her numb.

"When it comes to justice and black people in America, I don't expect it," she sighed.

Randall Kennedy, a black Harvard University law professor and author of several books on race relations, had difficulty reconciling the law with the mistrial, which he called "frightening."

"It appeared as though it was open and shut," said Kennedy, a native of Columbia, South Carolina. "Obviously, this is a case of some criminal action on the part of this police officer. Is it at all plausible that you have a man running and a police officer says, 'I'm firing in self-defense?'"

He added: "It's at this point that people are truly exasperated and

say, 'Do we really have anything that can seriously be called the administration of criminal justice?' Can we reach people? Are people even persuadable?"

On the day after the mistrial, Charles Witherspoon sat in the

main library in Columbia, reading the newspaper. He followed the trial closely and is well-versed in the facts of the case, like the 17 feet that separated Scott and the officer when he began firing at Scott.

Witherspoon, who is black, had no doubt Slager was guilty of murder, but the mistrial did not come as a surprise. It's an outcome the 54-year-old South Carolina native has come to expect.

"Murder is murder — unless you are a police officer," he said. "Someone is always going to find a way out for a police officer."

National Action Network South Carolina President James Johnson urged people to give the second trial a chance before

they get angry. He said he heard rumors of people threatening to "burn" Charleston, but he does not think it will happen.

"I urge the people to let the justice system take its course. Let's wait on the next trial before we decide to do anything stupid. We've got to live here. We don't want people coming from outside of Charleston" to protest, said Johnson, who is black.

Kennedy said the retrial points to the belief that the initial result was wrong.

"It's a good thing that people are paying a lot of attention to this and that they are shocked," he said. "What will really be terrible is when something like this happens, and people are not shocked."

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Author: The Associated Press
Size: 97.34 column inches
Florence, SC Circulation: 35092



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Michael Slager (right) walks from the Charleston County Courthouse under the protection from the Charleston County Sheriff's Department after a mistrial was declared for his trial.

Title: **Senators re-elect Leatherman**
 Author: From staff and wire reports
 Size: 51.15 column inches
 Florence, SC Circulation: 35092



Senators re-elect Leatherman

Adopt changes in rules to streamline legislation

From staff and wire reports

COLUMBIA — The South Carolina Senate re-elected Hugh K. Leatherman of Florence as president pro tem on Tuesday and adopted a set of rules that will make it harder for single senators to block legislation.

Leatherman is keeping his powerful leadership post, even though he has refused to take the job of lieutenant governor if the U.S. Senate confirms Gov. Nikki Haley as United Nations ambassador.

During Tuesday's postelection organizational session, the senators re-elected Leatherman 36-9. All nine nays came from Republicans.

"If you have a good quarterback, you need to keep that quarterback," said Sen. Harvey Peeler, a Republican from Gaffney, who nominated Leatherman.

No senator publicly challenged Leatherman. The election on the Senate floor followed a closed-door GOP caucus meeting.

Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster would replace Haley if she's confirmed as President-elect Donald Trump's U.N. pick.

The state constitution has called for the pro tem to become lieutenant governor, although some argue that a 2014 constitutional change approved by vot-

ers should allow McMaster to choose his replacement now, even though that ballot measure said all changes would begin with the 2018 election.

Some lawmakers have objected to Leatherman shunning the line of succession, and the question may

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Senate

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ultimately be decided by the state Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, Leatherman has no intention of leaving the Senate and giving up his job as South Carolina's most powerful politician for a largely ceremonial position. And he didn't want another senator to

even temporarily take the pro tem's role.

Leatherman's power comes from multiple roles. As finance chairman, the 85-year-old Florence Republican also controls the state budget and sits on various financial oversight boards.

As for who would replace McMaster, Peeler told his colleagues, "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it." Peeler also offered a warning for whose support for Leatherman may waver in the weeks ahead: "Make sure you cross that bridge before you burn it."

Peeler's own support marks a turnabout.

In June 2015, Peeler opened up a special legislative session by asking Leatherman to resign the pro tem position immediately. Peeler said then that Leatherman is capable of

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leading the Senate and being Senate Finance chairman, but not of occupying both roles simultaneously, as exhibited by the need for a special session to pass a budget.

Leatherman refused to step aside but had no other comment.

Senators first elected Leatherman pro tem in 2014, when then-Lt. Gov. Glenn McConnell resigned to be president of his alma mater, the College of Charleston. Sen. John Courson, who was pro tem at the time, resigned that post to avoid having to become lieutenant governor.

Senators then chose

Democratic Sen. Yancey McGill to momentarily become pro tem — long enough only to take the oath as lieutenant governor — since no Republican senator wanted the job.

Only two senators voted in 2014 against giving Leatherman the additional leadership role, saying it consolidated too much power.

In another action on Tuesday, the Senate implemented rule changes that Leatherman said would make the Senate more efficient.

The changes include provisions:

» Eliminating “minority reports,” which are attached to bills when they emerge from committees. A minority report essentially kills a bill unless two-thirds of the senators agree to debate it.

» Allowing high-priority bills to be debated earlier in the day than before. Under the old rules, a proposal that was given “special order” priority status was not heard until the end of the day — hours into the Senate’s daily session, when some senators are eager to quit for the day.

» Changing cloture rules so that the Senate can adjourn and return the

next day to the bill under cloture. The new rule will make it easier to end filibusters that senators can use to stall legislation.

In an email to the media from his communications director, Leatherman praised the new rules.

“Today, we adopted a set of rules that should make our time in the Senate Chamber more efficient and allow us to focus on the priorities of this state,” Leatherman said. “After all, that’s why we were all elected. I created a committee this past session to look at the rules and it’s a great step forward for us to come together and make these changes.”