

Title: **Roads bill heads to Haley 's desk**
 Author: ASSOCIATED PRESS
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Roads bill heads to Haley's desk

ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA — Legislators gave final approval Wednesday to legislation designed to jump-start improvements to South Carolina's deteriorating roads.

The House's 109-2 vote sent the compromise to Gov. Nikki Haley. Her office has not yet said whether she'll sign it.

Assistant Majority Leader Gary Simrill encouraged his colleagues to accept what senators passed late Tuesday, saying it comes down to not allowing another session to end without a roads bill.

"What I want to do is get something done," said Simrill, R-Rock Hill, who's led the House's road-funding efforts since fall 2014. "It sets about the process of making sure South Carolina's roadways will not be the laughingstock, the embarrassment," known for tire-busting potholes.

The measure allows for \$2.2 billion in borrowing over 10 years for infrastructure, funded with \$200 million annually in existing fees and vehicle sales taxes. Department of Transportation Secretary Christy Hall has said that frees up other money the agency can use to replace bridges and pave roads, allowing more than \$4 billion worth of total work.

Hall said that work includes replacing about 400 bridges statewide — eliminating the entire list of load-restricted bridges as well as 51 structurally deficient bridges on interstates and major highways.

The chambers agreed to the borrowing plan after senators had blocked proposals for the past two years that increased gas taxes.

Senate President Pro Tem Hugh Leatherman calls it a step in addressing South Carolina's crumbling highways — not a fix. The DOT has said it needs \$1.5 billion annually over several decades to bring the nation's fourth-largest highway system to good condition.

Opponents of hiking the gas tax — unchanged at 16 cents since 1987 — insisted on first restructuring the DOT to give the governor's office more oversight before sending the agency more money. They argued politics, not priorities, dictated which projects got funded.

With just one day left in the legislative session, the remaining dispute between the House and Senate had been the appointing process for DOT commissioners.

Neither chamber wanted to eliminate the commission, as Haley does. Currently, Hall answers to both Haley and the

commission, where legislators appoint seven of its eight members.

The final compromise gives the governor input in selecting all eight commissioners, though legislators still must approve them through a multistep process. Commissioners would again hire the DOT secretary. The governor has appointed the secretary since legislators last restructured the agency in 2007.

The measure also specifies that the secretary reports to the commission, which reports to the governor. Simrill said that solves confusion about who's responsible for what, as cited in a recent audit of the agency.

"Although this bill is not perfect, the House and Senate have worked together, made tough decisions and followed through with our promise to fix South Carolina's roads," said House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Hartsville.

He called on Haley to sign the bill as soon as it reaches her. The request comes a day after he took the podium to bash senators for their inaction and Haley for not demanding a vote.

"The people of South Carolina should not have to wait any longer for their dangerous roads and bridges to be repaired," Lucas said.

Title: **Haley signs more than 40 new laws**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
 Size: 42.47 column inches
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SOUTH CAROLINA LEGISLATION

Haley signs more than 40 new laws

Dozens more bills could become law within the week, as the Legislature passed a slew of bills in the session's final days

Legislators will return June 15 to take up Haley's vetoes

BY SEANNA ADCOX

Associated Press
COLUMBIA

New laws signed by Gov. Nikki Haley shorten the legislative session, allow South Carolinians to carry concealed guns in Georgia, and block petroleum companies from taking people's land for a pipeline.

Those are among more than 40 bills Haley quickly signed Friday, a day after legislators sent them her way.

Dozens more could become law within the week, as the Legislature passed a slew of bills in

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LAWS

same requirements to carry a concealed gun as South Carolina. Georgia doesn't require training for its permit.

- Private, for-profit companies can't acquire land for a petroleum pipeline through eminent domain. The law specifies

the session's final days.

While the session officially ended Thursday, legislators will return June 15 to take up Haley's vetoes.

Here's a look at some of the laws that took effect Friday:

- Future legislative

sessions will end three weeks earlier, on the second Thursday in May, unless a bad economy causes the state's revenue forecasters to reduce their estimates. South Carolina's regular legislative

only public utilities have the right to take property for public use, after giving the owners money. It was driven by residents' fears of losing their land to an underground pipeline planned to run from Belton to Jacksonville, Fla. The Palmetto Pipeline was

session is the 13th longest among states. The House, which wanted to cut even more weeks, has been trying to shorten the January-to-June session for 20 years, but prior proposals kept dying in the Senate. Proponents say shortening the session saves taxpayers money in legislators' per diems for food and lodging, plus mileage, and could encourage more people to seek the job.

- A reciprocity agreement with Georgia will make it easier for South

Carolinians with concealed weapon permits to travel back and forth. The law was sought mainly by residents in Aiken County, who drive daily into Augusta, Ga. Advocates argued not having reciprocity with the state's western neighbor is a real inconvenience. The law creates an exception to prior law barring state law enforcement from recognizing permits from states that don't have at least the

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cancelled earlier this year after Georgia passed a temporary moratorium on pipeline companies using eminent domain.

- Former students who didn't graduate solely because they didn't pass the high school exit exam can still petition their

school board to retroactively receive a diploma. The law erases the previous deadline of Dec. 31, 2015. As of Dec. 1, 6,000 people had received such diplomas. The last exit exam was taken in 2014. Earlier that year, legislators abolished the test and



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trials. The so-called "Right to Try Act" allows a doctor to prescribe medication that's in the first phase of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval process. Similar laws have been passed in at least 28 other states.

Access is limited to people with a terminal illness who have exhausted all options approved by the FDA and can't enroll in a trial. Available medicines must have passed basic safety testing.

- South Carolinians are

encouraged to "roll up their sleeves and lend a hand to make a positive difference in our great state." The law declares the third Saturday in May as the South Carolina Day of Service.

Title: **After 11 years, hope formentally illinmates**
 Author: GLORIA PREVOST GuestColumnist
 Size: 38.59 column inches
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After 11 years, hope for mentally ill inmates

GLORIA PREVOST

Guest Columnist

After 11 years of litigation, the S.C. Department of Corrections has agreed to make real changes in the treatment of inmates with serious mental illness. A settlement agreement between the agency and the class-action plaintiffs, Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities, could end the brutal treatment of an estimated 3,500 inmates with serious mental illness.

This is a long-needed agreement that has the potential to end a dark chapter in South Carolina history. Offenders with serious mental illnesses were subjected to abject brutality and neglect, much of which was captured on video that shocked the nation when shown in open court.

My organization brought the class-action lawsuit in 2005 after investigating numerous incidents of abuse and neglect. The case was tried for six weeks in 2012. In early 2014, Circuit Judge Michael Baxley issued a landmark ruling finding grossly un-

constitutional treatment of inmates with serious mental illness.

"The evidence in this case has proved that inmates have died in the South Carolina Department of Corrections for lack of basic mental health care, and hundreds more remain substantially at risk for serious injury, mental decompensation and profound, permanent mental illness," Judge Baxley wrote.

Judge Baxley's ruling was a huge victory, but it didn't resolve the problems. That depended on the Corrections Department making significant changes. Last week's settlement resolves the lawsuit.

It creates an independent process to monitor implementation of the plan that would transform the culture and performance of Corrections Department employees who deal with inmates with serious mental illnesses.

It establishes measurements that

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HOPE

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have strict timetables and will be supervised by independent national experts. The test for satisfaction of the standards is that the department would have to maintain compliance for at least two years.

The Corrections Department will have four years to implement the remedial guidelines.

Plaintiffs met with strong resistance from previous gubernatorial administrations. But after Gov. Nikki Haley appointed Bryan Stirling corrections director, the tone of negotiations changed. Even though our discussions were tough and the issues were complicated, Mr. Stirling recognized the need for a cultural change and demonstrated an attitude that was both open and constructive. A level of trust developed among the participants that allowed us to make progress.

The governor and Mr. Stirling deserve much credit for the agreement; if fully implemented, it

will comply with Judge Baxley's order. The General Assembly also has supported funding to enable the Corrections Department to comply with the agreement.

This settlement agreement is historic. But it is only the first step. While the current governor and

corrections leadership have demonstrated a commitment to reform, it will be up to the next governor to assure the four-year implementation of the remedial plan, and the General Assembly must continue to appropriate the funds.

Although we are extremely pleased that the case is on its way to resolution, we continue to regret that the state fought this case tooth and nail, wasting resources that could have been used to provide treatment for our clients.

Ms. Prevost is executive director of Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities; contact her at prevost@pandasc.org.



Title: **Gun reciprocity legislation passes**
 Author: BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND Aiken Standard
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Gun reciprocity legislation passes

BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND
Aiken Standard

A bill that would allow South Carolina and Georgia concealed weapons permit holders to lawfully carry between the states was signed by Gov. Nikki Haley.

The bill passed the S.C. Senate by a 35-3 vote Wednesday.

Rep. Bill Hixon, R-North Augusta, the bill's primary sponsor, said Thursday the Senate's vote was the "most wonderful thing" to have happened.

"I had tremendous help from all my House members, the Senate Democrats and Republicans, House Democrats and Republicans, the National Wild Turkey Federation, Congressman (Jeff) Dun-

can," Hixon said, "Many many people wanted this done."

Hixon has long said the issue is important to Georgians and South Carolinians who live along the states' border, including his constituents in Aiken County.

Supporters of the bill have also described CWP holders mostly as law abiding and Hixon said Georgia's permit application is more in-depth than the application in the Palmetto State.

Those who oppose the measure have pointed out that Georgia does not require training for permits.

Georgia's law will not change as the state recognizes permits for residents of any state that also recognizes Georgia, Hixon said.

Title: **Ethics reforms stalled after years of debate**
 Author: BY JAMIESELF jself@thestate.com
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S.C. LEGISLATURE

Ethics reforms stalled after years of debate

House, Senate disagree on when to make ethics investigations public

Independent investigations, income disclosure could be adopted during mid-June session; little progress made on other proposals

House leaders question whether Senate really wants to pass reforms

BY JAMIE SELF

jself@thestate.com

After four years of debate about how to strengthen the state's ethics laws, S.C. lawmakers might pass two changes to the rules governing public officials' behavior later this month.

Maybe.

Dozens of ethics bills have been introduced since late 2012, when Gov. Nikki Haley formed a blue-ribbon committee to evaluate state laws governing how public officials should behave.

But out of the nearly two dozen recommendations made by that panel, only two have a chance of becoming law four years later, when the Legislature wraps up its work during its mid-June veto session.

Critics say the state Senate is

to blame for the lack of progress. The House has passed more than a dozen ethics-related bills, sending them to the Senate, where most have died.

Even if lawmakers give final approval later this month to the two bills near the finish line, good-government groups say the state's ethics laws still will need more work.

"Dark-money disclosure – that is a really serious problem and it's getting worse," said John Crangle with Common Cause of South Carolina, referring to secretive groups that raise war chests to influence elections but do not disclose their agenda or donors.

Legislators also need to clarify the law dictating how campaign

money can be used and when public officials should abstain from voting because they have a conflict of interest, said Lynn Teague, with the League of Women Voters.

Lawmakers also should be barred by law from forming political action committees that they can use to raise money and dole out campaign contributions to their colleagues. Those committees – now banned by House and Senate rules but not by law – can wield excessive influence over the legislative process, critics say.

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➔ MORE INSIDE

Gov. Nikki Haley signs more than 40 bills into law. **3A**

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ETHICS

Even if lawmakers pass the two proposals that could become law when they return later this month, the push for tougher ethics rules will be ongoing, Teague added.

"We can't do what we did after (Operation) Lost Trust and figure that we fixed things," she said, referring to a landmark federal corruption sting of S.C. lawmakers more than two decades ago that resulted in the last major update to the state's ethics laws.

ETHICS BILLS HIT ROADBLOCK

Of the two ethics bills lawmakers still could pass, one proposal would end the practice of state lawmakers exclusively investigating ethics complaints against themselves, shifting investigations to a revamped State Ethics Commission that supporters say will allow independent watchdogs to oversee lawmakers.

Another bill would require lawmakers to disclose some information about their private income.

Differing versions of both bills have passed the House and Senate, and now are being reviewed by a panel of lawmakers tasked with ironing out the two chambers' differences.

But the chances of the bills passing dimmed last week when an apparent agreement on the independent-investigations bill fell apart.

The first signs of that breakdown, said state

House Speaker Pro Tempore Tommy Pope, R-York, came when senators insisted last week on adopting their version of a key part of the investigations proposal.

That insistence surprised Pope, a former prosecutor who is negotiating for the House with senators on the bill.

Earlier in the week, five of the six negotiators had reached agreement on independent investigations. However, one state senator did not attend that meeting.

When State Sen. Gerald Malloy, D-Darlington, rejoined negotiations Wednesday, he asked for more time to share details of the agreement with Senate Democrats. A day later, Malloy said the Senate preferred its version of the proposal. Later that day, the Senate voted 37-1 to insist on its version.

After that vote, Pope expressed frustration at the Senate's position to his House colleagues.

"I don't know where we can go, folks," he said. "We have given and given and given."

But Sen. Larry Martin, R-Pickens, who led the Senate's negotiators, said he still is confident both sides can reach an agreement.

PLACING BLAME

Other state leaders were disappointed with the setback.

House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, blamed senators, citing them as the reason the state needs ethics reforms.

"These common-sense reforms passed the House – overwhelmingly, with bipartisan support – because our chamber understands the importance of this issue," said Lucas, who formed an ethics task force shortly after succeeding House Speaker Bobby Harrell, the Charleston Republican who resigned and entered a guilty plea to campaign finance violations.

"The fact that a few senators' objections prevented these bills from advancing through the legislative process further proves that the people of South Carolina need reforms to hold elected officials accountable and restore the public's trust," Lucas added.

Gov. Nikki Haley's office also urged lawmakers to act.

"Passing independent investigations and income disclosure has been a top priority (of the governor's) for four years and – finally – this year we are closer than ever to getting them over the finish line," said Chaney Adams, Haley's press secretary, adding the House and Senate have made more progress this year than ever before.

"(T)here is no reason or excuse why the people of South Carolina shouldn't be able to celebrate passage of ethics reform this year."

DISAGREEMENT AHEAD FOR ETHICS PROPOSALS

Haley made ethics reform a priority in 2012 shortly after the then-GOP

majority House Ethics Committee investigated and dismissed ethics complaints against her related

to when she was a Lexington state representative.

Other high-profile ethics cases have spurred cries for ethics reform, including cases against former Gov. Mark Sanford, Lt. Gov. Ken Ard, state Sen. Robert Ford and Speaker Harrell. Ard, Ford and Harrell resigned in the wake of ethics investigations. An ethics probe that led to charges against Harrell also continues under the State House dome.

The governor's ethics task force – led by two former S.C. attorneys general – made nearly two dozen recommendations for strengthening the rules that say what public officials can and cannot do.

Those recommendations included requiring public officials to disclose sources of their private income and the amount if that income comes from an organization that lobbies state government or a business that has government contracts.

Lawmakers could pass an income disclosure bill in mid-June. With an independent investigations bill, an income disclosure bill is before House and Senate negotiators.

But ethics watchdogs worry income disclosure might not pass.

Attorney-legislators have pushed back against disclosing the sources of their income, saying they have a duty to keep their clients confidential,

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Teague said.

The House also has a provision in its income disclosure bill that would require "dark money" political groups to disclose their donors.

However, the income disclosure bill will not pass the Senate if it is coupled with a dark-money rule, where there is too much opposition to the idea, said Sen. Martin, who has been a target of the veiled groups and supports requiring that they disclose their donors.

Teague, with the League of Women Voters, said her organization wants "dark money" groups to disclose their donors. But, she added, "we don't want it as a poison pill" that could kill income disclosure for public officials.

Haley's task force also recommended that an independent panel investigate ethics complaints against lawmakers, instead of them policing themselves.

There still is time for the Senate and House to pass a bill creating independent oversight of lawmakers.

But the two chambers disagree over a key provision of the bill – how long secrecy should shroud an investigation if the State Ethics Commission, which would conduct the independent investigation, decides a lawmaker has violated the state Ethics Act.

The House prefers making public immediately a commission finding that there is probable cause of a violation.

But the Senate wants to let legislative ethics committees review the Ethics Commission's finding and ask for additional investi-

gation before making public an allegation. If, after added investigation, the Ethics Commission reverses its position, finding no evidence that a lawmaker violated ethics laws, the allegation would remain confidential.

Senate negotiators argued that, under their proposal, any final determination by the Ethics Commission that there is reason to think a lawmaker violated the law would become public.

House negotiators disagree.

The Senate's desire to delay making allegations public – and prolong secrecy – will keep legislators under the cloud of suspicion brought on by recent ethics scandals, Pope said, adding the impasse makes him question whether senators really want any ethics reform.

"It makes me feel like, is there really the will (in the state Senate) to have this reform? If there isn't the will to have this reform, that begs the bigger question of 'Why?'"

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Ethics reforms going nowhere

Four years after state leaders pledged to update the state's ethics laws, no major reforms have become law. A look at key changes, recommended by a blue-ribbon commission, that have not moved:

- Strengthen penalties for violations of the state ethics laws
- Ban the use of campaign money to pay criminal penalties for violations of the state ethics law
- Adopt greater protections and rewards for whistle-blowers who report government waste, fraud or other abuses
- Shorten the time limit that public bodies have to respond to and fulfill requests for public information,



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limit the fees that can be charged for searching and copying that information, and provide for enforcement in instances where public bodies drag their feet

- Eliminate the exemption of legislative papers from public disclosure under the state's Freedom of Information Act
- Expand required disclosures of conflicts of interests for public officials, including requiring attorney-legislators to disclose fees when they represent clients in cases where a state agency is an opposing party, and requiring public officials to disclose all fiduciary positions they hold, whether compensated or not
- Extend to two years from one the period a legislator must wait to represent a client for a fee before a state entity after voting to pick a member of that organization
- Expand the definition of lobbyist to require registration and disclosure from people and entities that lobby local governments and other subdivisions of state government

Banning leadership PACs, but not Great Day?

Ethics reform advocates and Gov. Nikki Haley's ethics task force recommended banning, in state law, lawmakers from setting up political action committees, groups whose spending the lawmakers can direct.

Critics say the organizations allow powerful public officials – and interests that lobby state government – to exceed campaign contribution limits, exerting excessive power over elections and the legislative process.

The House and Senate already have banned the so-called

leadership PACs by rule, but not law.

But some ethics advocates say Haley now has a leadership PAC in the form of A Great Day SC, the political group formed to target state Senate incumbents who Haley opposes.

Haley political adviser Tim Pearson runs the political group, which is trying to oust longtime GOP state senators in the upcoming June 14 Republican primaries.

Great Day is an “abuse of power,” said John Crangle of Common Cause of South Carolina, a good-government, watchdog group.

But Great Day differs from a leadership PAC in two important ways, according to the group:

- First, Great Day was set up under federal law as an IRS-designated 527 group, which requires it to disclose its donors and its spending publicly. Current S.C. law requires no disclosure of political groups' activities, making it easy for political groups to form and conceal their activities.

- Also, unlike leadership PACs, Great Day was not set up to give campaign contributions to candidates and cannot do so. Instead, the group is raising money and spending money on ads in some Senate races where Haley has decided to target incumbents and support their opponents.

“As governor, (Haley) believes it is not only appropriate but her responsibility to make the voters aware of exactly how well – or how poorly – they are being served by their elected officials,” Pearson said. “She will continue to use every tool at her disposal to make sure the voters know the truth before they cast their votes on June 14.”

Title: **Haley signs more than 40 bills**
 Author: SEANNA ADCOX ASSOCIATED PRESS
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Haley signs more than 40 bills

Legislators to return

June 15 to take up vetoes

SEANNA ADCOX

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Those are among more than 40 bills Haley quickly signed Friday, a day after legislators sent them her way. Dozens more could become law within the week, as the Legislature passed a slew of bills in the session's final days.

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Haley

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Title: **Legislators need guts to remove last Confederate flag**
 Author: BY ANDREW DYS adys@heraldonline.com
 Size: 48.67 column inches
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COMMENTARY

Legislators need guts to remove last Confederate flag

BY ANDREW DYS
adys@heraldonline.com

Politicians are weak.
 Some, close to brainless.

Only someone without guts, or a brain, would not want to take down the Confederate flag from the Citadel's chapel in Charleston.

That flag of hate and racism, it flies in a church. Take it down.

Somehow, a year after a white racist - who wanted to start a race war under the colors of that flag - killed nine black people in another church in the same city, the flag still flies in the chapel at a public college.

South Carolina's politicians, the joke of America for so long because the state defiantly flew the rebel flag, have a chance to finally put the last celebrated Confederate flag to rest. They have not done so.

The Citadel is a public college, supported by all - including blacks.

It is a college where blacks were barred until 1966.

A college where the

Confederate flag did not fly until blacks wanted equality in the late 1950s and early 1960s. So the Citadel and political leaders in those days - who wanted neither integration, nor equality, nor black cadets - put the flag in a church, and incredibly it still flies.

South Carolina, under public and political pressure and the world's eyes in June and July 2015, finally removed the Confederate flag from the Statehouse grounds. It took an act of the S.C. Legislature, which is made up of politicians. Nikki Haley, the governor, pushed for the flag to come down. She is a politician but she finally realized that hate had to die and had the courage to say so.

She wants the Citadel flag to go, too.

The Citadel's Board of Visitors wants the flag down.

That flag flies in the chapel with state and territorial flags. It flies next to the Virgin Islands

flag. I lived there for so many years; my wife and her family are from there. It is a place where 95 percent of the American citizens are black, and there are no Americans anywhere who are more patriotic. No racist ever had the guts to fly a Confederate flag there, in that America.

Yet at the Citadel chapel, the Confederate flag, declaring hatred for blacks, flies next to the Virgin Islands flag that celebrates the equality and freedom of blacks.

Seemingly anyone with a beating heart and a single brain wave that would register on a machine should want the Confederate flag down forever.

Except it takes politicians, who are known for having little heart and littler brains.

Politicians are not courageous by nature. Most are soft and flabby, and they do everything except the right thing until they

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DYS

have to be shamed into it, like taking the flag down from the Statehouse. It took nine murders to take down that flag of death.

To take the flag down from the Citadel would require the same legislature to act.

Tom Hall, who was born in Chester and whose ancestors fought for the Confederacy after signing the secession documents, a Citadel class of 1989 alum – and there is no prouder Citadel man in America – wants that Confederate flag out of the Citadel chapel.

“Down,” Hall said.
 “Down. Down.”

Hall is not just some guy. He is a lawyer by trade who made a movie called “Compromised” about the Confederate flag and pushed for it to come down for decades. He organized and spoke at rallies in the summer of

2015 between the massacre in Charleston and the removal of the flag. He spoke before thousands of people – white and black.

He spoke of love and unity and how that flag is neither.

He knows the history of the Confederate flag and the Citadel like probably no one else. He is proud of his heritage, too, but respects how that flag means hate to blacks.

That flag, said Hall, was abused, and politicians pushed to fly it at the Citadel and the Statehouse, politicians who wished there were still slavery.

“Who puts a battle flag in a church?” Hall wondered.

Hall has spent the last two decades researching that flag, talking about that flag, pushing for the flag to come down. Hall

has asked to speak before the S.C. Legislature, maybe as early as next week, to give the politicians a history lesson on how those who opposed integration and black equality introduced the Confederate flag to the Citadel chapel.

He will ask those politicians to do the right thing: Take that flag down.

“The question is: Do they have the courage to do what is right?” Hall asked.

Last year, it took nine murders in June for politicians to do what was right. Maybe in June 2016, the South Carolina Legislature will act without needing to wipe up rivers of spilled blood and tears first.

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Title: **SC military vets will get a break on their state income taxes**
 Author: JEFF WILKINSON THE STATE
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SC military vets will get a break on their state income taxes

JEFF WILKINSON
THE STATE

The S.C. General Assembly passed a bill offering state income tax deductions for military retirees.

The plan would offer military retirees with at least 20 years of service a deduction of \$17,500 a year for those under 65 or \$30,000 a year for those 65 or older.

A caveat is that the military retirees under 65 must embark on a second job in the state with an annual salary of at least \$17,500. An amendment requires the tax break to be phased in over five years.

Also, the benefit would be extended to the surviving spouses of service members who have passed away.

The amended bill passed the Senate and House Thursday with 18 minutes left in the session.

"This is the first step in what needs to be a continuing process to make us competitive with other states," said Bill Bethea, chairman of the S.C. Military Base Task Force, which is charged with keeping military bases open and retaining and creating military jobs in the Palmetto State

"This is the first step in what needs to be a continuing process to make us competitive with other states."

BILL BETHEA
CHAIRMAN OF THE S.C. MILITARY BASE TASK FORCE

Bethea, a Bluffton attorney, noted that 26 states levy no state tax on retirees' pensions. Also, some other states that tax pensions still have more competitive benefits.

About 58,000 military retirees live in South Carolina, according to the U.S. Department of Defense. The bill would cost the state about \$18 million a year, according to the S.C. Department of Revenue.

The bill's backers said the benefits outweigh the cost.

The tax break would retain disciplined workers, according to the task force, which was appointed by Gov. Nikki Haley and chambers of commerce in the state's four military communities. The cost would be offset by taxes on the retirees' new jobs and those of their spouses.

The bill's passage would also help cement South Carolina as one of the most military friendly states in the nation. That's a distinction that will bolster the state's standing with the Pentagon when new rounds of base closings and realignment, called BRAC, kicks in, perhaps in 2019.

Currently, the Military Officers Association of America rates South Carolina yellow – or average – when it comes to military issues. The rating is not green – the highest – primarily because of the income tax issue.

Boosters said another benefit of the bill is that it would say "thank you" to retirees for their lengthy service, which often includes combat.

Title: **What SC lawmakers did for you this session**
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What SC lawmakers did for you this session

CASSIE COPE

THE STATE

Permanent fixes to major issues — repairing the state's roads and rebuilding poor schools — were outstanding as the 2016 legislative session drew to a close Thursday.

Still, S.C. lawmakers did some things for you this session.

A start to fixing roads

S.C. lawmakers approved a borrowing proposal that will pay for \$4 billion in road-and-bridge repairs during the next 10 years.

In Richland and Lexington counties, the largest project will be widening and upgrading the interchanges in Malfunction Junction, the poorly designed, congested area around the intersection of Interstates 20 and 26.

The Transportation Department

also estimates it will spend \$38 million in Richland and \$37 million in Lexington to repave roads. Specific roads are not yet available, the Transportation Department said, adding that will depend on annual assessments.

Also, of the nearly 400 bridges to be replaced statewide, 24 are in Richland and 10 are in Lexington.

The roads bill still must be signed into law by Gov. Nikki Haley.

You can carry your gun to Georgia

Georgians with concealed-weapon permits will be able to carry their weapons in South Carolina, if Haley signs a proposal passed by lawmakers this week.

The proposal also would allow South

Carolinians with concealed-weapon permits to carry their guns in Georgia.

Meanwhile, proposals to strengthen background check requirements before gun purchases — proposed by Democrats after last June's Emanuel AME massacre — went nowhere. Democrats say they will try again next year.

You can use the bathroom of your choice

In the wake of North Carolina's controversial House Bill 2, S.C. lawmakers tried to enact similar bans on transgender people and students using the bathrooms of their choice. However, those efforts — led by state Sen. Lee Bright, R-Spartan-

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Session

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burg — failed.

Another bathroom-ban bill would have applied only to Berkeley County students. That proposal — opposed by Gov. Nikki Haley, schools chief Molly Spearman and Commerce Secretary Bobby Hitt — ultimately was defeated, too.

You can get your Viagra without new hurdles

Rep. Mia McLeod, D-Richland, said she wanted to make it more difficult for men to get Viagra.

Before a doctor could prescribe Viagra, McLeod proposed requiring a sworn affidavit from a sexual partner, a report from a sexual therapist and a cardiac-stress test.

Actually, the proposal by McLeod — running for the state Senate — was a tongue-in-cheek swing at S.C. GOP lawmakers for their efforts to restrict women's access to abortion. They were not amused, and the proposal did not pass.

However, abortions will be limited

A ban on abortion at 20 weeks of pregnancy or later became law, including no exceptions for cases of rape or incest.

Under the law, an abortion would be allowed at 20 weeks or later only in the case of a severe fetal anomaly that would prevent the child from surviving or if a doctor says an abortion is necessary to protect the mother from death or severe bodily impairment.

Opponents say the restriction is unconstitutional.

You cannot get \$1,000 for shooting coyotes

A proposal failed to offer a \$1,000 reward for killing tagged coyotes.

The proposal, supported by state

Rep. Alan Clemmons, R-Horry, would have directed the S.C. Department of Natural Resources to tag and release at least 12 coyotes across the state. The tagged coyotes would have had a bounty of at least \$1,000 each, payable to any

hunter who bagged them.

Supporters said the bounty program would have encouraged hunters to shoot the vermin. Opponents said it would encourage reckless hunting.

You could have to register your moped

Moped drivers soon could be required to register with the Department of Motor Vehicles and follow the same traffic rules as other vehicles.

The proposal, which lawmakers sent to Gov. Haley Thursday, also would require mopeds to stay off most interstates — or roads with speed limits higher than 55 mph — and raise the minimum age to drive a moped to 15 from 14. It also would require drivers and passengers younger than 21 to wear a helmet.

The bill does not require moped drivers carry insurance. Senators stripped that requirement earlier this week, saying it would have doomed the bill.

Ethics reform remains unresolved



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When lawmakers return to Columbia June 15 to take up the governor's budget vetoes, they also could take up two proposed ethics reforms.

An agreement appeared to have been

reached earlier this week on a proposal to have an independent panel investigate ethics allegations against lawmakers.

However, that deal broke down Thursday when the Senate insisted on its independent-investigation proposal.

But House Speaker Pro Tempore Tommy Pope, R-York, said the Senate plan would keep investigations of lawmakers secret for too long, leaving the General Assembly under the cloud of recent ethics scandals.

Title: **Haley signs more than 40 new laws**
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SOUTH CAROLINA LEGISLATION

Haley signs more than 40 new laws

Dozens more bills could become law within the week, as the Legislature passed a slew of bills in the session's final days

Legislators will return June 15 to take up Haley's vetoes

BY SEANNA ADCOX
 Associated Press
 COLUMBIA

New laws signed by Gov. Nikki Haley shorten the legislative session, allow South Carolinians to carry concealed guns in Georgia, and block petroleum companies from taking people's land for a pipeline.

Those are among more than 40 bills Haley quickly signed Friday, a day after legislators sent them her way.

Dozens more could become law within the week, as the Legislature passed a slew of bills in the session's final days.

While the session officially ended Thursday, legislators will return June 15 to take up Haley's vetoes.

Here's a look at some of the laws that took effect Friday:

- Future legislative

sessions will end three weeks earlier, on the second Thursday in May, unless a bad economy causes the state's revenue forecasters to reduce their estimates. South Carolina's regular legislative session is the 13th longest among states. The House, which wanted to cut even more weeks, has been trying to shorten the January-to-June session for 20 years, but prior proposals kept dying in the Senate. Proponents say shortening the session saves taxpayers money in legislators' per diems for food

and lodging, plus mileage, and could encourage more people to seek the job.

- A reciprocity agreement with Georgia will make it easier for South Carolinians with concealed weapon permits to travel back and forth. The law was sought mainly by residents in Aiken County, who drive daily into Augusta, Ga. Advocates argued not having reciprocity with the state's western neighbor is a real inconvenience. The law creates an exception to prior law barring state law enforcement from recognizing permits from states that don't have at least the

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same requirements to carry a concealed gun as South Carolina. Georgia doesn't require training for its permit.

- Private, for-profit companies can't acquire land for a petroleum pipeline through eminent domain. The law specifies only public utilities have the right to take property for public use, after giving the owners money. It was driven by residents' fears of losing their land to an underground pipeline planned to run from Belton to Jacksonville, Fla. The Palmetto Pipeline was cancelled earlier this year after Georgia passed a temporary moratorium on pipeline companies using

eminent domain.

- Former students who didn't graduate solely because they didn't pass the high school exit exam can still petition their school board to retroactively receive a diploma. The law erases the previous deadline of Dec. 31, 2015. As of Dec. 1, 6,000 people had received such diplomas. The last exit exam was taken in 2014. Earlier that year, legislators abolished the test and replaced it with two considered more useful to students' future success, with scores that can go on work resumes or college admissions applications.

- Terminally ill patients gain access to medicines being tested in clinical

trials. The so-called "Right to Try Act" allows a doctor to prescribe medication that's in the first phase of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval process. Similar laws have been passed in at least 28 other states. Access is limited to people with a terminal illness who have exhausted all options approved by the FDA and can't enroll in a trial. Available medicines must have passed basic safety testing.

- South Carolinians are encouraged to "roll up their sleeves and lend a hand to make a positive difference in our great state." The law declares the third Saturday in May as the South Carolina Day of Service.