

Title: Environmental programs suffer amid tussle for cash
Author: BY SAMMY FRETWELL sfretwell@thestate.com
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Environmental programs suffer amid tussle for cash

BY SAMMY FRETWELL sfretwell@thestate.com

Sputtering air monitors, leaking underground storage tanks, acid-draining mines and poorly regulated dams are among the problems that state environmental officials say they must address after years of financial neglect.

Many basic environmental programs people depend on to protect the air they breathe and the water they swim in need an infusion of cash, according to the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Since last fall, agency director Catherine Heigel has been urging state budget writers to provide the resources she believes her staff needs to perform its duties. Last week, she told a House Ways and Means subcommittee her agency can't provide many basic services without more money.

"The first responsibility lies with me, to make sure you even know what has not been done,"

said Heigel, who became DHEC director last summer.

DHEC, one of the state's largest agencies, asked the Legislature for an extra \$35 million in the next fiscal year to bring many environmental and health programs back to a basic level of service. The department's overall state budget is \$106 million, down sharply from the levels of nearly a decade ago.

Some lawmakers say DHEC's budget request is a whopper that could be difficult to approve in a year with many other statewide needs, ranging from improving roads to addressing unexpected expenses from last fall's devastating floods.

But Rep. Murrell Smith, who chairs the Ways and Means subcommittee, said past budget cuts have hurt the state agency - and DHEC needs more revenue.

"It's what happens when we cut agencies and reduce inspectors that are in charge of

our public health," Smith, R-Sumter, said last week. "We've got difficult choices. I guess it would be nice if we had known about this years ahead of time."

Part of today's financial challenge dates to the Great Recession that began late in 2008. At the time, former DHEC director Earl Hunter and his staff struggled with dwindling state revenues. At one point in the past decade, state lawmakers allocated as little as \$83 million to DHEC. Some programs, such as dam safety, sustained deep

SEE DHEC, 13A

\$35 million budget increase floors some lawmakers

DHEC says improvements needed after years of cuts

Pinewood site needs another \$5 million

FROM PAGE 3A

DHEC

reductions, former dam officials have said.

Critics, including state Sen. Joel Lourie, D-Richland, also blame DHEC for later refusing to fund programs in the name of government efficiency, when the department's actions were really for political reasons. One of the main efforts by previous director Catherine Templeton was making the agency more efficient.

Templeton said Friday her efficiency effort saved the agency money, but didn't hurt programs critical to the environment or public health. Instead, she didn't seek big budget increases because they weren't needed at the time, Templeton said.

Heigel, a former Duke Energy executive, was named DHEC chief after Templeton quit in 2015. While Heigel is drawing

good marks from many for the work she has done at DHEC so far, not everyone is sure DHEC needs the \$35 million.

S.C. Sen. Lee Bright, R-Spartanburg, said state agencies have a tendency to seek big budget increases in years when state revenues are high, such as they are now.

"The 'soeey call' goes out, and everybody comes running to the trough,"

Bright said.

Gov. Nikki Haley doesn't think DHEC needs \$35 million in extra money next year, but she did include nearly \$18 million in new funding for the agency in her executive budget recently, records show.

Her office said that, as with any budget, the governor must make decisions based on priorities. However, Haley recom-

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The \$945,000 DHEC asked for would help the agency begin testing many creeks and rivers monthly for pollution, as the agency once did before budget cuts ate away at the program. The increase would allow DHEC to hire 16 additional staffers to bolster its existing staff of 23. Haley has proposed \$201,250, which the agency says would allow DHEC to hire three additional staff members.

Congaree Riverkeeper Bill Stangler and Charleston Waterkeeper Andrew Wunderley said DHEC needs every penny it can get for the program. Their organizations are testing water in some areas because DHEC's program is so threadbare, they said.

"We are, essentially, doing the state's job," Wunderley said. "The state, in a perfect world, would not have a need for us. But the problem is that sampling is so underfunded and undersupported by the Legislature and the governor's office that there is a huge need for groups like us to step in and fill that gap."

This year, DHEC's overall water quality monitor-

ing budget is \$1.4 million. A decade ago, the budget was \$2.5 million.

Wunderley said sites his group tests at Shem Creek in Mount Pleasant indicate water quality is less safe for swimming than DHEC's limited testing indicates.

Monitoring the air for pollution is another program DHEC has said needs a financial boost. The agency asked for \$464,000 to help fix or replace aging monitoring equipment. That equipment is increasingly prone to errors that can provide inaccurate air pollution readings, Heigel said. Haley did not propose money for air quality monitoring, according to a budget sheet provided by DHEC to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Overall, the agency needs to replace 98 monitors, samplers and other equipment in the next seven years. In 2006, the overall air monitoring budget was \$2.3 million. Today, the budget for air monitoring is \$1.95 million. Inaccurate air data can affect agency decisions on whether to issue air pollution alerts or whether to permit new and expanding industries, agency officials said.

Other financial challenges DHEC outlined include:

- Abandoned gold mines. The agency requested \$450,000 to help

stabilize contaminated gold mines that threaten to pollute the surrounding environment with acid and metals. Two mines are undergoing federally funded Superfund cleanups. But the state also has an ongoing financial obligation to pay some of the costs. Haley's budget plan included \$350,000 for the gold mine cleanup work.

- Dam safety and agricultural programs. The agency is seeking \$661,500 — \$595,000 of which would be for seven extra staffers to inspect and oversee South Carolina's 2,400 regulated dams. The program now has fewer than seven full-time workers and has, for years, been classified by dam safety experts as one of the most poorly funded programs in the country. Last October's devastating flood exposed problems with the program when dozens of dams failed across the state. Haley's budget also included \$661,500, records show.

- Laboratories. The agency is seeking about \$1.5 million to beef up laboratories that test samples the agency collects for pollution. It said department labs "have lacked necessary investments for over a decade and (are) now unable to reliably, securely and efficiently provide the required technology/laboratory services." Haley included \$1.1 million

for labs in her budget.

- Underground storage tanks. The agency requested \$291,000 to remove underground storage tanks. Gasoline and oil that leak from the tanks are among the primary sources of groundwater pollution in South Carolina. In the past, DHEC has made funding to help cleanup tank leaks a low priority. Haley's budget also included the \$291,000.

In addition to DHEC's budget plan for the fiscal year starting July 1, the agency also supports a request by administrators of a closed toxic waste dump on Lake Marion for another \$5 million to help improve the site so that it won't leak pollution. State taxpayers already spend about \$4 million annually to manage the site.

DHEC's state budget request for the fiscal year that begins July 1 is \$142.4 million, including the \$35 million increase. The agency noted that if the full amount is approved, DHEC's "base state budget would still be approximately \$27 million less than in fiscal year 2008."

The request also includes money for health programs, including \$500,000 for infectious disease epidemiology, \$1.75 million for tuberculosis control and \$1.8 million for nurses salaries.

The agency also wants \$11.2 million for a data center.

Title: **Politics of rage**
 Author: BY LESLEY CLARK, ANITA KUMAR AND MARIA RECIO McClatchy Newspapers
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Politics of rage

Voter anger toward Washington colors presidential campaign

BY LESLEY CLARK, ANITA KUMAR AND MARIA RECIO

McClatchy Newspapers

MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA

Craig Ziemke has voted for Democrats all his life, including twice for President Barack Obama. Not this year.

"The whole country is going to hell," the retired factory worker said in a high school gymnasium while waiting for Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump to arrive. Ziemke's fury is deep: Roads and bridges across the country are falling apart, jobs are scarce and the U.S. border is wide open, he said.

"We're letting all these people into the country. No one even knows who the hell they are," he said. "We don't need any more Arabs. The United States ... is just a dumping ground for everyone."

Ziemke plans to caucus for a Republican on Monday — and probably for Trump, "the only one with brains," he said.

If Obama's 2008 campaign in Iowa and beyond defined the election as one of "hope and change," this year's may well be described as the politics of rage — evident in both parties.

In interviews, dozens of Iowa voters in both parties express anger and uprising as their driving motivation. They're fed up with Congress. They're mad about stagnant wages, companies sending jobs overseas and terrorists sneaking in across the border.

The rage is driving the campaigns of the "outsiders." For Republicans, that's the bombastic Trump and his chief rival, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas.

Trump rallies can be boisterous, with the audience turning on hecklers as Trump urges security to "get 'em the hell out of here." News cameras captured several white men in November apparently kicking and punching a Black Lives Matter

protester at a Trump event. In Vermont in January, Trump called on his security guards to "confiscate" a protester's coat. "You know it's about 10 degrees below zero outside," he said from the stage. "You can keep his coat. Tell him we'll send it to him in a couple of weeks."

On the Democratic side, the discontent fuels the insurgent campaign of Sen. Bernie Sanders, the independent from Vermont who vows a political revolution to fix what he says is a system skewed to favor the rich.

"I plead guilty. I am angry," Sanders recently told an audience in Maquoketa, Iowa, pushing back against former President Bill Clinton's critique that voters need "not anger, but

SEE ANGER, 10A

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FROM PAGE 9A

ANGER

answers.”

“I am angry and millions of Americans are angry,” Sanders said. “We are angry that our people are working longer hours for lower wages. We are angry that our criminal-justice system is broken. And we’re angry that we have a corrupt campaign-finance system that allows billionaires to buy elections.”

That appeal resonates with voters furious over the role of money in politics: “I can’t even stand it, when I hear how much money they’re all willing to spend to run for office, but not provide day care for children,” said Monica McCarthy, waiting in a union hall in Des Moines to hear Sanders speak. “It’s all

rich guys who want to take over this country giving to other rich guys to help the rich.”

The irate discontent shows in polls: More than 6 in 10 people say all or most Americans are angry with Washington, according to a recent Monmouth University survey.

Republicans are more likely than independents or Democrats to say the majority of their fellow citizens are teed off at their government.

And it’s not just aimed at Washington.

Yet, if Americans agree their elected officials make them furious, they’re divided on the cure: Fifty percent say elected officials who are not willing to compromise are the cause of

the problem, while 40 percent say elected officials who don’t stand up for their principles are to blame.

“We have reached the point where many feel that the opposite side of the political aisle poses an existential threat to the country itself,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth Polling Institute in West Long Branch, N.J. “It is not clear how Washington can be fixed when Republicans and Democrats don’t even agree on what the problem is.”

The anger has prompted a look outside of politics — way outside. Previously, he said, it was governors who were considered “outsider” candidates for the presidential nomination. Now outsiders have scarcely

any political experience.

“Our politics have changed,” Miringoff said. “... There’s a growing mistrust of institutions,” including government, the health care system, media and pollsters.

The fury worries establishment Republicans. South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley warned fellow Republicans against following “the siren call of the angriest voices” when she delivered the party’s response to Obama’s State of the Union address in January.

She didn’t name Trump. But he happily brushed off the rebuke later, saying he was “very angry because our country is being run horribly” and would “gladly accept the mantle of anger.”



MIC SMITH AP

Trump supporter rebukes a protester at a December rally in Mount Pleasant.

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ROSS D. FRANKLIN AP

Supporters of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump argue with immigration rights protesters who attempted to interrupt Trump as he was speaking before a crowd of 3,500 on July 11 in Phoenix.



CHARLES KRUPA AP

A protester yells as she is escorted by security out of the audience during an address by Donald Trump in Vermont earlier this month.

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Volunteers to rebuild Conway home destroyed by October flood

BY ANGELA NICHOLAS
For The Sun News

A Conway family that lost their home during October's historic statewide flood will get a new one in February thanks to a local mission group and a grant from the One SC Flood Relief Fund.

Built in 1919, the house where 51-year-old S.C. DOT trade specialist Archie Simmons lived with his disabled mother and sister was razed recently to make room for new construction.

"We lost our home," Simmons said, "and everything in it."

He said he had returned on clear roads from a 12-hour workday. He had been napping for about an hour when his mother started shaking him to get up. He said the floodwaters rose so quickly the family had to hurry to get out. Floodwaters had already covered the yard and the road.

Four feet of water saturated the house for more than two weeks during the record storm that killed 17 people and prompted Gov. Nikki Haley to declare a state of emergency. Irreparable damage left the Sim-

mons family homeless.

The family's dire situation came to the attention of Todd Wood, resort missionary with IMPACT Ministries, who worked to obtain \$25,000 from the flood fund set up under the umbrella of the Central Carolina Community Foundation. The money is being used to assist three Horry County families who suffered flood damage, he said. Much of the funding, along with community donations of time and materials and \$14,000 from FEMA, is designated to rebuild the Simmons home.

Wood said IMPACT Ministries worked with Horry County Emergency Management and VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster) to provide disaster response to help families whose homes were damaged by water and mud. From

SEE VOLUNTEERS, 2C

Floodwaters rose so rapidly the family had to rush to evacuate

IMPACT Ministries has worked to provide disaster response to help families whose homes were damaged by water and mud

The 51-year-old Simmons lives with his disabled mother and sister

FROM PAGE 1C

VOLUNTEERS

October through November, 174 Horry County homes were "mudded out" and repaired by volunteer laborers that included Mennonite crews from out of state.

The three most damaged homes, which includes the Simmons home plus a house

off Highway 90 and one in Forest Brook, needed additional help. With the aid of the flood relief fund two of them have been repaired.

The Simmons home, however, was too damaged to save, Wood said.

"We took a team in to

mud the house out, but there was just nothing left to save," Wood said. "With two of the three family members disabled, I knew we had to step in and help them get a new home."

Wood said the home will be rebuilt from the ground

up using volunteer labor. Greg McFarland of PMH Architects donated his time to the mission project preparing house plans reworked from a previous IMPACT Ministries build in Myrtle Beach. The plans are for a 1,000-square-foot home to

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be raised 9 feet off the ground due to its proximity to the lake.

“Raising the house high enough to be safe from future flooding posed a problem for Archie’s disabled mom and sister,” Wood said. To address that problem, Seaside Elevators of Little River has stepped in to install an elevator.

Other donors include Ashleigh Weatherly of Kyzer & Timmerman Structural Engineers who donated structural plans and Lowe’s, which has donated cabinets. Through a partnership with Catholic Charities, all new furniture will be provided through the organization’s “House in a Box” program.

While the American Red Cross stepped in to help the family with some immediate needs after the flooding, the Salvation Army has provided \$1,500 to be used for the purchase of building materials, Wood said.

“We’ll have tons of people like this donating everything from port-a-johns to plumbing to electrical,” Wood said.

A man from North Carolina brought his bobcat down recently to help tear down what was left of the house. Simmons said the house was gutted in four hours and he took some time off work to help out by burning the debris.

Everything is on hold until

site work — which includes bringing in loads of dirt to level the ground — can be completed. Wood anticipates the build will begin the third or fourth week of February and will take two weeks. He already has a group of college students scheduled the last week of February to help with painting, landscaping and the move in, but other volunteers are needed.

Simmons said his family is grateful for the help and feels especially blessed to have Wood and IMPACT Ministries looking out for them.

“The good Lord always looks out for his children and I believe he sent us

Todd to be our guardian angel,” Simmons said.

While he looks forward to returning to the land his family has called home for decades, he said the loss of the house was especially devastating because his father died suddenly of a heart problem only 17 months ago. One of the few items the family recovered from the water soaked home was a severely damaged and irreplaceable family photo with his dad partially visible.

To donate to the project or to volunteer, contact Wood at (843) 254-7777 or email todd@impactmb.org

Angela Nicholas can be reached at aknicholas28@gmail.com.

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DHEC says improvements

BY SAMMY FRETWELL
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COLUMBIA, SC

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"It's what happens when we cut agencies and reduce inspectors that are in charge of our public health," Smith, R-Sumter, said last week. "We've got difficult choices. I guess it would be nice if we had known about this years ahead of time."

Part of today's financial challenge dates to the Great Recession that began late in 2008. At the time, former DHEC director Earl Hunter and his staff struggled with dwindling state revenues. At one point in the past decade, state lawmakers allocated as little as \$83 million to DHEC. Some programs, such as dam safety, sustained deep reductions, former dam officials have said.

Critics, including state Sen. Joel Lourie, D-Richland, also blame DHEC for later refusing to fund pro-

grams in the name of government efficiency, when the department's actions were really for political reasons. One of the main efforts by previous director Catherine Templeton was making the agency more efficient.

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Her office said that as with any budget, the governor must make decisions based on priorities. However, Haley recommended funding the agency's top priorities, including improvement in the dam safety program, the governor's office said.

One of the chief increases in spending sought by DHEC is for water quality monitoring.

The \$945,000 DHEC asked for would help the agency begin testing many creeks and rivers monthly for pollution, as the agency once did before budget cuts ate away at the program. The increase would allow DHEC to hire 16 additional staffers to bolster its existing

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TIM DOMINICK tdominick@thestate.com

Barite Hill is an abandoned gold mine in McCormick County that is leaking acid draining water. It is undergoing a federal Superfund cleanup.

Title: **Investing in colleges is investing in South Carolina's future**
 Author: GLENN MCCONNELL Guest Columnist
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Investing in colleges is investing in South Carolina's future

GLENN MCCONNELL

Guest Columnist

Higher education is critical to South Carolina, and I want to commend *The State* for taking that topic head on in its thorough assessment of Gov. Nikki Haley's sixth State of the State address ("A few corrections on the State of the State," Wednesday). While there was much to admire in Gov. Haley's speech, especially regarding her support of K-12 education and her words of comfort to Charleston's Mother Emanuel congregation and the state's flood victims, the governor is off base in calling our public college and university system "bloated."

I invite the governor to take a tour of the four-year comprehensive colleges and targeted research universities, like the College of Charleston, before making such a misinformed assertion about "bloat," especially in terms of our state's facilities needs. I think she would come away with a much different impression after seeing firsthand how many of the state's institutions are making do with outdated, inadequate build-

ings. And she would certainly have a much different opinion if she saw the deferred maintenance lists that each institution juggles and struggles with.

In her speech, Gov. Haley said higher education does not "represent our greatest need" and then painted a one-sided picture of Wall Street-like excess: "high-rise dorms, sparkling new graduate centers and world-class administrative buildings."

That is not the reality I see. At the College of Charleston, our facilities needs are not outrageous or lavish. We have structures that are centuries old and require constant upkeep. We have several classroom buildings that were intended for a much smaller student body and are deteriorating more quickly because of greater use. And we need help in repurposing several academic buildings in order for us to provide the best student experience possible. We're not trying to be the darling of

developers; rather, we are the champions of practicality and reuse. That's not extravagance; that's simply pragmatic.

The College of Charleston does not have a traditional college campus; ours is woven into the historic neighborhoods of the Charleston peninsula. Of our roughly 150 buildings, 85 are more than 100 years old and several are more than 200 years old. Without a doubt, we are the largest historic preservationist in Charleston. And that's saying something when you consider that Charleston is internationally renowned for preserving and protecting its history and buildings. These structures require considerable maintenance, some of which is regulated by the Board of Architectural Review because we are located in Charleston's Historic District.

Unfortunately, Gov. Haley's argument makes it sound like an either-or scenario: Either we invest in higher education, or we invest in K-12. I, like many university presidents, disagree with that notion: We must invest in both. And we can invest in both through a bond bill. We, as a state, have the capacity to do this without great financial sacrifice.

I do agree with Gov.

Haley that the state's universities and colleges cannot simply pass on the expense of upkeep to the parents and students through tuition and fees. The maintenance of our state's buildings is the responsibility of our state government. In fact, it is a vital part of its public mission. A bond bill helps address that need, and does it in a fiscally responsible way.

Whether we want to admit it or not, we are in an intellectual arms race. Georgia and North Carolina are investing more heavily in their education systems because they see how that investment not only attracts industry, but keeps industry and ultimately supports the quality of life for all of their citizens. By acting now on a bond bill — when it makes the most economic sense — we avoid a brain drain and instead create a sustainable brain gain for our state.

Mr. McConnell, a former lieutenant governor and Senate president pro tempore, is president of the College of Charleston; contact him at president@cofc.edu.



Title: How Trump keeps SC lead
Author: BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
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ELECTIONS 2016

How Trump keeps SC lead

Front-runner has tapped into anger of GOP voters with bravado

SC supporters like how Trump crosses lines other candidates won't

Controversial comments don't hurt him

BY ANDREW SHAIN
ashain@thestate.com

The Donald Trump show is working in South Carolina.

Fueled by his feisty personality and stoked by voter anger over politics as usual, the New York billionaire has led S.C. presidential polls for six months.

Most political experts in the early primary state did not think Trump's lead would last six weeks.

Trump started his campaign by calling Mexican immigrants rapists and murderers, and saying U.S. Sen. John McCain, a former Republican presidential nominee, was not a hero for being a Vietnam War prisoner of war.

"I could not get my jaw off the floor," former S.C. GOP chairman Katon Dawson said. "You cannot do that in modern-day politics. I said, 'He's committing political suicide.'"

Instead, Trump's poll numbers shot up in South Carolina, which holds the South's first GOP primary on Feb. 20.

Trump's numbers have stayed at the top despite calling a cable news anchor a bimbo, suggesting a temporary ban on Muslims

SEE TRUMP, 7A

ONLINE

At thestate.com: A video look inside last week's Donald Trump rally in Lexington County

MORE INSIDE

S.C. GOP Party leaders give their take on what a Trump or Cruz win in the Palmetto State will mean to the party, 7A

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The 1984 campaign was about Morning in America. The 1992 edition was about The Economy, Stupid. In 2008, the theme was Hope. Now comes 2016, the Days of Rage. 9A

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TRUMP

entering the country and claiming falsely that he is self-financing his campaign, when he has received \$5.8 million in contributions through October.

“He’s broken all the rules and paid none of the costs,” said Barry Wynn, another former S.C. Republican chairman.

The voters who come by the thousands to Trump’s rallies across South Carolina don’t care.

As they listen to rock anthems and show tunes blared ahead of Trump’s appearances, those supporters are angry enough at government, and tired enough about what they see as political correctness, to proclaim Trump as the candidate who can fix the country, citing the smarts that made him a household name as a real estate developer and reality television star.

“Everyone stretches the truth,” said Teri Watts, a 52-year-old Lexington restaurant manager at a Trump rally on Harmon’s Tree Farm near Gilbert last week. “There’s not one person who does not do that.”

‘CONFIDENCE IS ATTRACTIVE’

Trump’s anti-politician rhetoric has worked across the country as voting in the 2016 election gets underway Monday in Iowa.

Trump leads polls in Iowa and New Hampshire, the second state to vote.

In South Carolina — the third state in the GOP primary lineup, a state where tea party-backed politicians have found success — the thrice-married, one-time abortion-rights-supporting Trump is tops among voters of all age groups and political preferences, including evangelicals.

Trump supporters say they don’t want the Republican Party pushing another establishment

candidate, like former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, who failed to beat Democratic President Barack Obama in 2012.

“If (Romney) had Trump’s attitude, he would have wiped them all over the place,” Ed Bakay, a retired small business owner from McCormick, said while waiting to hear Trump for a third time last week.

Trump’s S.C. supporters say they like how Trump talks to them.

During hourlong monologues that can veer from how well he is polling to how he is the best hope of military veterans for help to how much he thinks of his family, Trump speaks like he is holding court at a Thanksgiving table or around a backyard grill.

“He comes across with confidence, and confidence is attractive,” said Richard Quinn, a longtime S.C. political consultant.

Trump’s blunt, straight talk — and fame — excite the crowds, who wait hours to get into his rallies, more like concerts than the polite lectures at other candidates’ events.

“It’s down to a level to where I say, ‘I get it,’” said Carolyn Caughman, a 65-year-old government retiree from Elgin, who attended her sixth Trump rally last week. “People here are saying, ‘This man is strong, says we’re going to fix this. We believe him, and he’s our last hope.’”

Trump supporters find comfort in his lack of political correctness, which shocked state political watchers until his lead continued into 2016.

Trump’s combative campaigning has turned off the state’s top Republican, Gov. Nikki Haley. But his caustic comments did not prevent

Trump from winning the endorsement last week from a longtime member of the state’s GOP establishment, Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster, a former state party chairman who said he appreciated the front-runner’s honesty.

Former S.C. party chairman Dawson puts Trump’s chances of winning the S.C. primary and the GOP’s nomination at better than 50 percent.

“We thought there was no way he could offend that many people and win the nomination,” he said. “And we were wrong.”

POLITICAL P.T. BARNUM?

Trump’s populist appeal has

led to comparisons with Ronald Reagan, a former actor whose communication skills and connection with voters revolutionized the GOP after his White House win in 1980. That was the same year South Carolina cemented its status as an important early primary state by giving Reagan his first large-margin win.

“The way I hear people talk about (Trump is), ‘I’m connected to him because I think he’s real, genuine,’” former S.C. GOP chairwoman Karen Floyd said. The candidate more people identify with has “more of a chance, than not, (to be) elected president.”

Shannon Bowen, a public relations expert who teaches at the University of South Carolina, said Trump has something in common with famed circus owner P.T. Barnum.

Barnum would do and say anything to get people to come to his shows — from claiming falsely to have the biggest man in the world at his circus to writing letters to newspapers under assumed names com-

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plaining about his own events, she said.

“There was no such thing as bad publicity,” Bowen said.

Trump’s controversial statements have the same effect.

They draw huge crowds, including protesters who disrupt his rallies. And the media space spent covering Trump’s controversial comments — such as saying his supporters would not abandon him even if he shot people on Fifth Avenue — is space that’s not going to his competitors, Bowen said.

“People say they can’t agree with him — and they can’t look away,” she said.

Bowen expects Trump will temper his comments if he wins the GOP nomination. But, for now, she thinks most voters understand Trump needs to deliver a bravado-laced, rough-edged message to reach his goal.

“Most people who listen don’t take everything he is saying as fact,” she said. “It’s all part of the show.”

S.C. GOP consultant Quinn said Trump deserves credit for correctly reading the anger of Republican electorate, including many Palmetto State voters.

Quinn recalled how famed S.C. political consultant Lee Atwater said the secret in politics was “to know what was obvious just a little before everyone knew it was obvious.”

“It’s hard not to be in awe. Trump seems to strive to be politically incorrect, and the GOP base laps it up,” said Quinn, who is working for a pro-Jeb Bush presidential political action committee. “He has a gut understanding of the culture of 2015-16 more than anyone in the race.”

But reality will hit soon for Trump, some political watchers predict.

Once the now-12-candidate GOP field narrows, an anti-Trump candidate who is gathering convention delegates could

attract \$100 million in contributions for a supportive political action committee, said Wynn, an S.C. co-chair of Bush’s campaign.

And with only two or three candidates remaining, Trump will have to become more serious on issues, providing the details that pundits have said he thus far has lacked.

“You can’t run it all on showbiz star appeal all of the time,” Wynn said.

UNIQUE VOICE IN 2016

For now, however, showbiz is working for Trump.

“He’s resonating because he doesn’t sound like consultants, strategists and pollsters are behind him writing his comments or whispering in his ear,” USC’s Bowen said. “He doesn’t sound like everybody else.”

Trump’s unscripted moments come across as authentic, former S.C. GOP chairwoman Floyd said.

“I think he’s more scripted than people give him the benefit for,” she said. “He knows the art of entertainment. From the second you go to one of his events and hear (the song), ‘We’re not going to take it’ — that’s so well-scripted and powerful.”

When the presidential race began formally last year, Dawson thought candidates — including the one he supported, former Texas Gov. Rick Perry — could start thoughtful conversations about ways to fix Washington.

Perry dropped out and the remaining hopefuls, insisting on talking traditional policy issues, are fumbling as they try to determine how to handle Trump’s popularity.

“We’re having emotional conversations instead,” Dawson said. “This hit a vein. Sausage making is not interesting to voters. We’ll see if Trump is a movement or a moment.”

Whether it’s part of his act or

not, Trump backers often say they like that the candidate speaks out on unpopular subjects, such as deporting undocumented immigrants. His willingness to speak directly is what brings out the crowds.

“I talk like that, too. He says what’s on his mind, how he feels, direct to the point,” said Watts, the restaurant manager. “When he opens his mouth, everybody stops to listen to what he has to say.”

They listen because Trump has tapped into the frustrations of white Christian voters, who feel like their voices are no longer heard.

“It’s like he really says what we really feel — angry at how bad the economy and everything has transpired in the United States, border security,” said Caughman, the government retiree. “I just feel like everything is going down the drain.”

BLAME OBAMA

Trump’s supporters say the country’s problems stem from Obama — from his health care insurance overhaul to his failure to contain ISIS and terrorist threats.

Other GOP White House hopefuls also complain about the president’s record, but they have been drowned out by voters who prefer candidates, like Trump, who have never held elected office.

“Maybe the legacy of Barack Obama is that he drove the Republican Party crazy,” said U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, the Seneca Republican who is backing Bush after dropping out of the GOP race for president last month.

Trump’s legacy in South Carolina might be creating a new broad coalition of Republican voters, who once were counted on to elect governors like Carroll Campbell and senators like Jim DeMint, Wynn said.

“There’s nothing wrong with that,” he said. “It creates a new

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energy and new excitement.”

Trump is winning across the spectrum of S.C. Republican voters, polls show.

He is tops with conservatives, moderates and independents. He is winning among men and women and all age groups. He is the favorite of tea party supporters and foes.

In South Carolina, evangelicals account for roughly 6 in 10 GOP voters — a voting bloc wooed each presidential election cycle.

Newt Gingrich, who won the 2012 S.C. Republican primary over Romney, led with evangelicals, as did Mike Huckabee, who nearly beat McCain in the Palmetto State in 2008.

This year, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, a conservative Texas Republican running second to Trump in the polls, is counting on those religious voters.

But it is Trump, who has been married three times and said he has not asked God for forgiveness, who is winning among S.C. evangelicals — much to the surprise of state religious leaders.

Kevin Baird, a Charleston pastor and former director of the S.C. Pastors Alliance, said Trump has caused a fracture among evangelicals.

Baird said that, in his opinion, Trump has not done enough to prove his religious credentials despite talking about the Bible and his faith at rallies.

“I think it’s a tactical and

strategic move,” said Baird, who is leaning toward Cruz, but has not endorsed a candidate. “No one is expecting perfection. But I’m not sure a man who drops profanity easily and touts his sexual promiscuity, which popular culture may venerate, can say he is a Christian leader.”

Trump also is leading in another state with a large bloc of evangelicals — Iowa.

Graham predicts that if Trump wins the Iowa caucuses, he will take South Carolina. But the senator also thinks S.C. voters will deliver a clear anti-Trump candidate who can win GOP support moving forward in the primaries.

“We could create an alternative,” Graham said.

South Carolina has a history of picking the GOP’s presidential nominee, failing to do so just once over the past three decades — in 2012, when Gingrich won.

Floyd expects South Carolina again to pick the party’s nominee, even if it’s Trump.

“I think there’s a reason for everything,” she said.

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Iowa vs. SC

How likely Republican caucus and primary voters in Iowa, who vote Monday, and South Carolina, who vote Feb. 20, compare in some key

areas, according to recent polls:

Similar concerns on issues: S.C. and Iowa voters share worries about national security and terrorism. But the economy, churning with a rough start of the year in the stock market, and the electability of a GOP candidate in November have crept to the top of recent polls in importance.

Differing evangelical favorites: Very religious voters account for about 60 percent of GOP voters in both states, though they make up a smaller portion of the U.S. population. U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, considered the conventional choice for religious voters among the two front-runners, has led most recent polls of Iowa evangelicals. But Donald Trump is the top choice of S.C. evangelicals.

Differing excitement among first timers: Iowa is expecting record turnout in its caucus Monday due to excitement about Trump and Cruz. A recent NBC/WSJ/Marist poll backs up that chatter. Four-in-10 likely Iowa GOP caucus-goers said they will participate for the first time. South Carolina is not expected to draw as many new voters on Feb. 20. A little more than 1-in-10 likely S.C. voters said they will cast their first GOP presidential primary ballot.

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What if Trump or Cruz wins the SC primary?

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Four former S.C. Republican Party chairs and the current chairman give their take on what it would mean to the party if one of the GOP presidential front-runners considered political outsiders, New York billionaire Donald Trump or U.S. Sen. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, wins the state's Feb. 20 primary:

● **Barry Wynn** (chair,



Trump

1990-93): "It shows the new coalition that's different than the coalition that elected Carroll Campbell, Jim DeMint, Lindsey Graham and Tim Scott. There's nothing wrong with that. It creates a new energy and new excitement. Sometimes these things self-correct."

● **Katon Dawson** (chair, 2002-09): "We're up for grabs. Evangelicals are no longer the monolith bloc anymore. Our Republican base is more indicative of the

rest of the country. This might be the party for now on."

● **Karen Floyd** (chair, 2009-11): She expects the S.C. primary again to pick the GOP's nominee, as it has all but once since 1980. "I think there's a reason for everything."

● **Chad Connelly** (chair, 2011-13): "South Carolina will matter for a long time. Anybody the Republicans nominate will be better than the train wreck of a disaster (Democratic front-runner

Hillary Clinton will be."

● **Matt Moore** (chair, 2013-present): "South Carolina has shown a tendency for doing the unexpected in the past six years (since electing Republican Gov. Nikki Haley). ... A party discussing its future is a good thing. If you're standing still, you're going backwards."

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Donald Trump delivers his speech at Harmon Tree Farm near Gilbert on Jan. 27.