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Opinion / Editorial Roundup:

Aiken Standard: Leadership PACs need to be tossed

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20131108/AIK0201/131109591/1018/AIK02/editorial-leadership-pacs-need-to-be-tossed>

Editorial

The S.C. Senate has already done it. Now it's time for the S.C. House to do so as well. The elimination of so-called Leadership Political Action Committees – commonly called PACs – should be a top priority when legislators return to Columbia in January. PACs are political fundraising groups with ties to legislative leaders. However, the groups should be considered a plague at the State House. Perhaps the most prominent is the Palmetto Leadership Council – a group with ties to S.C. House Speaker Bobby Harrell. According to the Charleston Post and Courier, the group channeled about a half-million dollars from 2008 to 2012 to the S.C. House Republican Caucus, the state GOP and to more than 130 candidates for legislative office.

Note: S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley said this week that any legislator who fights ethics reforms is a “legislator we have a problem with.” We agree.

Rock Hill Herald: Zais drops effort to repeal standards

<http://www.heraldonline.com/2013/11/07/5384380/zais-drops-effort-to-repeal-standards.html>

State Superintendent of Education Mick Zais said he wanted to permanently repeal state standards for K-12 class sizes and staffing to give local school districts more “flexibility.” The reaction of much of the education community: No thanks. Zais proposed to eliminate standards covering, among other things, class sizes in public schools, teacher workloads, certification requirements for teachers and the number of guidance counselors, aids and librarians schools must have. The Legislature has voted to suspend these standards for the past four years during the height of the recession, and Zais asked the state Education Board last month to make the changes permanent.

The State: The Elusive Search For The Perfect Candidate

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=Ro4PsD8R

Cindi Ross Scoppe

In the run-up to Tuesday's Columbia city elections, I was struck by the number of times our editorial board took issue with the way the candidates we were endorsing had handled significant issues. I also was struck by the fact that we endorsed all four incumbents on the ballot, even though the City Council has done a number of things in recent months and years that we have found deeply troubling - from its long refusal to let the voters consider empowering the mayor (which finally was overcome only because citizens forced a vote through a petition process) and its rush job on committing taxpayers to \$50 million on the Bull Street project (including taxpayer funding for a baseball stadium; a baseball stadium) to its wasteful spending of hospitality tax funds and its penchant for making decisions, or at least receiving routine information that the public ought to be able to see, in private.

Greenville News: Open your hearts to the homeless

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013311080005>

Editorial

Most often homeless people in Greenville County live their quiet lives of desperation out of sight and out of mind. An occasional reminder may be an encounter with an aggressive panhandler, or maybe a Sunday trip that takes someone near Triune Mercy Center when homeless men and some women are waiting for the doors to open to a church service and a free meal. Such encounters with the homeless likely are exceptions, however, for many people tucked away in suburban neighborhoods or rural enclaves. That's unless, of course, they belong to a church or a service organization that as part of its mission routinely works with the

homeless and helps those who serve them.

South Carolina Education News:

Associated Press: SC schools show improvement on state report cards

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

Seanna Adcox

More of South Carolina's public schools and districts received "excellent" ratings again this year, due to increases in standardized test scores and the high school graduation rate. The state Department of Education released data Friday showing 50 of the state's 82 districts achieved the top two ratings of "excellent" or "good" on 2013 state report cards. That compares to 42 of 84 districts last year, before several districts in Marion County consolidated. The top tiers showed only slight improvement when broken down by the state's 1,199 schools.

The State: Graduation Rates, Test Scores Improve For SC Public Schools

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=bXgd4zy8

Jamie Self

More S.C. public schools and districts received excellent ratings on this year's report cards than last year, and fewer were rated at risk – moving state education leaders to applaud what they see as widespread improvement in the state's public schools. On-time graduation rates also rose for the third consecutive year, including for students living in high-poverty areas. Graduation rates for African-American and Hispanic students saw stronger gains than rates for all students, according to the S.C. Department of Education. Two Midlands school districts – Richland 2 and Kershaw – received excellent ratings on both student academic performance and improvement from the previous school year.

Post and Courier: South Carolina schools see best report card ratings, graduation rates since 2009

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20131108/PC16/131109467/1389/south-carolina-schools-see-best-report-card-ratings-graduation-rates-since-2009>

Diette Courrage Casey

Chalk it up to South Carolina notching its best on-time graduation rate ever and higher test scores in most subjects and grades. Report cards for South Carolina's schools and districts look better this year than they have since 2009, which was the first year it gave the PASS test to third- through eighth-graders. Neil Robinson, chairman of the state Education Oversight Committee, called the 2.6 percentage point jump in the state's graduation rate to 77.5 percent "phenomenal," and he pointed to the majority of schools statewide that were rated "good" or "excellent" as a sea change compared with when that figure hovered at 32 percent.

Post and Courier: South Carolina looking to combine schools' state, federal ratings into one, easy-to-understand system

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20131108/PC16/131109468/1389/education-leaders-want-to-unify-its-two-accountability-systems>

Diette Courrage Casey

South Carolina education leaders want to merge the state's two, often-confusing school accountability systems, but it's unclear what the new version will look like. The state has two accountability systems — the state-mandated report card ratings and the letter grades that satisfy federal law. South Carolina schools see best report card ratings, graduation rates since 2009. Both use the same input measures such as test scores and graduation rates, but they evaluate schools' performance differently. State officials said they want to change the accountability systems so that it's clear and sends a consistent message, and the 2013-14 school year could be the last where schools and districts receive two separate ratings.

Post and Courier: South Carolina doesn't see significant increases on national exam while nation makes progress

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20131108/PC16/131109481/1177/south-carolina-doesn-x2019-t-see-significant-increases-on-national-exam-while-nation-makes-progress>

Diette Courrage Casey

Although South Carolina's report cards tell a good story about the state of its schools, national test results released Thursday made it clear the state still has room for improvement. South Carolina students are trailing the nation in reading and math, and test scores show they haven't made significant gains during the past two years, according to results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the

Nation's Report Card. That's in contrast to the country as a whole making progress on those same tests, with the nation posting its best-ever math scores. Reading scores also reached an all-time high for eighth-graders, and fourth-graders' scores were bested only by those in 2011.

Local Education News:

Greenville News: Greenville County earns good grades on school report cards

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013311080014>

Ron Barnett

Forty-four out of 91 Greenville County schools earned Excellent absolute ratings on their school report cards, and all but five were either average or above, according to data released today by the state Department of Education that showed a general upward trend on the annual accountability measurement. Report card grades are based on student performance on the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards, the high school exit exam, end-of-course tests and the graduation rate. The "absolute" ratings are based on data from spring 2013.

Rock Hill Herald: State report cards: Rock Hill schools' growth 'below average'

<http://www.heraldonline.com/2013/11/08/5384887/state-report-cards-rock-hill-schools.html#storylink=cpy>

Rachel Southmayd

The Rock Hill school district did not perform as well as other York County school districts on the state's annual report cards, released to the public today. Rock Hill schools' absolute rating was "Good" and its growth rating was "Below Average." The three other York County school districts received "Excellent" absolute ratings and either "Good" or "Excellent" growth ratings. Lancaster County schools got an absolute and growth rating of "Excellent," while Chester County schools received "Average" on both ratings.

Aiken Standard: District cheers 'excellent' State Report Card grade

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20131108/AIK0101/131109567/1004/district-cheers-excellent-state-report-card-grade>

Rob Novit

The Aiken High School teachers had gathered for lunch on Wednesday after students had departed on the monthly early release day – all of them waiting for an announcement from Principal Garen Cofer. When they heard the word "excellent" and then heard it again, the teachers burst into applause and a few shouts of "Woo-hoo!" Aiken received an "excellent" absolute grade through the annual State Report Cards – based on academic performance and other criteria, including graduate rate.

Aiken Standard: Schools work hard to alleviate bullying

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20131108/AIK0101/131109565/1004/schools-work-hard-to-alleviate-bullying>

Rob Novit

In 2010, Langley-Bath-Clearwater Middle School held a school-wide assembly with a wide range of speakers talking about bullying and urging students to understand the impact it can have. Following that event, some of them expressed hope that people would listen. Yet in a world overwhelmed by social media, that's a huge challenge in every walk of life, including schools. "For the last year and a half, bullying has spiraled out of control," said Paula Winchester, LBC's guidance counselor. "Every issue we have that's related to conflict and threats of fighting comes from cyber-bullying."

Spartanburg Herald Journal: Spartanburg school districts maintain or improve report cards ratings

<http://www.goupstate.com/article/20131108/ARTICLES/131109734/1083/ARTICLES?Title=Spartanburg-school-districts-maintain-or-improve-report-cards-ratings>

Lee G. Healy

Spartanburg school districts either maintained or improved ratings on the most recent state report cards, released today by the S.C. Department of Education. The 2013 report cards mark the 13th year for the state ratings system, which encompasses all South Carolina schools and school districts. The report cards award both an absolute rating, which reflects that year's academic achievement, and a growth rating, which is based on individual student test scores from one year to the next. Report cards use a five-tier ratings scale that labels schools as "excellent," "good," "average," "below average" or "at risk" in both the absolute and growth categories.

Sun News: Horry, Georgetown school districts continue to see improvement on state report cards

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/2013/11/08/3822390/horry-georgetown-school-districts.html#storylink=cpy>

Vicki Grooms

Graduation rates continued to increase some in Horry and Georgetown county schools this year, while both districts retained absolute ratings of good and excellent, respectively, and Georgetown earned a higher rating for growth, according to results from the 2013 annual state report cards released Friday by the S.C. Department of Education. Schools and districts in the state saw significant improvement this year, with 30 of 82 districts receiving an absolute rating of excellent, while 20 were rated good, 24 were average, six were below average and two were at risk, according to the S.C. Education Oversight Committee.

Florence Morning News: Pee Dee, SC have upward trend in graduation rates, standardized tests
http://www.scnow.com/news/education/article_c50837de-4808-11e3-83bb-001a4bcf6878.html

Ellen Meder

Local school districts are attributing their freshly recognized success to years of thoughtful changes in classroom instruction as Pee Dee schools overall showed improvement on the state accountability report cards, following an upward trend in achievement statewide. The South Carolina Department of Education, in conjunction with the Education Oversight Committee, released school and district report card data for the 2012-2013 school year Friday morning. The report card tabulations, required by state law, included performance data from Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) tests administered to elementary and middle school students, end of course tests, the high school exit exam and graduation rates, all of which are given different rates to give each school and district both an absolute performance rating and a growth rating.

Florence Morning News: State committee poised to simplify grades for schools
http://www.scnow.com/news/education/article_cb870f22-480d-11e3-a6bf-001a4bcf6878.html

Ellen Meder

The South Carolina Department of Education released the state accountability report cards Friday, but parents will recall that they saw news of report cards just this summer. That's because every year two sets of accountability reports come out in South Carolina: one to satisfy state law and the other to meet federal guidelines. Though this confusing system will likely persist at least another year, state education leaders are putting the wheels in motion to consolidate the way schools are judged. Click here In a conference call with districts and media Wednesday, Education Oversight Committee Chairman Neil Robinson said though this year's results are good South Carolina "can't claim victory for students yet.

South Carolina News:

Greenville News: S.C. saves millions in Medicaid costs after cutting early elective deliveries in half
<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013311080006>

Liv Osby

South Carolina saved \$6 million in Medicaid costs in the first quarter of this year by halving early elective deliveries, and it reduced infant hospitalizations in the bargain, a new analysis shows. Under an effort called the Birth Outcomes Initiative, all 43 hospitals in the state that deliver babies agreed to stop these early elective deliveries — those before 39 weeks gestation which are often unnecessary and done for convenience — because babies born at 37 and 38 weeks can suffer health problems that lead to costly treatments. And in January, the state's Medicaid program, along with BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, stopped paying for those deliveries.

Greenville News: GOP chair criticizes tea party tactics against Greenville County Council chairman
<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/article/20131107/NEWS/311070072/GOP-chair-criticizes-tea-party-tactics-against-Greenville-County-Council-chairman>

Rudolph Bell

The chairman of the Greenville County Republican Party is condemning what he calls high-pressure tactics by tea party activists opposed to a possible 1 percent sales tax hike, but the activists aren't apologizing for focusing their opposition on Greenville County Council Chairman Bob Taylor. As part of their efforts to oppose the possible tax hike for road improvements, tea party activists singled out Taylor, picketing in front of his former employer, Bob Jones University, and erecting signs at his church, Hampton Park Baptist Church.

McClatchy: Graham pushes measure to limit abortions

<http://www.thestate.com/2013/11/07/3084234/graham-pushes-measure-to-limit.html>

James Rosen

Sen. Lindsey Graham introduced a bill Thursday that would ban abortions once a pregnancy reaches the 20-week mark, pushing Senate legislation that the Republican-controlled House of Representatives passed earlier this year. Graham, a South Carolina Republican running for election next year to a third term, cited significant advancements in science and technology since the Supreme Court's landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling, which prohibited abortions in the last trimester of pregnancy.

Greenville News: More charges filed against former S.C. State official

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013311080007>

Tim Smith

Federal prosecutors are accusing former South Carolina State University board Chairman Jonathan Pinson of Simpsonville of dozens more charges, but his lawyer says they aren't true and stem from a federal defendant who is trying to help himself by making allegations against others. A 69-page superseding indictment unsealed Thursday charges Jonathan Pinson and others with racketeering, wire fraud, mail fraud, extortion, money laundering, theft and making false statements. Pinson, 43, had already been indicted earlier this year on charges that he solicited various "kickbacks" in return for agreements to use his official position to benefit unnamed persons who authorities allege agreed to provide items of value to him "and his accomplices."

Sun News: Jury favors bank in state Sen. Cleary's loan fraud lawsuit

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/2013/11/07/3822748/jury-favors-bank-in-state-sen.html#storylink=cpy>

David Wren

An Horry County jury on Thursday said the bank that state Sen. Ray Cleary once helped run did not defraud him in a \$3 million property loan, agreeing with bank officials that Cleary is solely to blame for the loan's default because he failed to do his own due diligence. Brad Floyd, a lawyer representing Bank of North Carolina, told the jury during closing arguments that Cleary was motivated by money during the real estate boom but then tried to blame the bank when the economy soured and development plans for the property fell through.

Post and Courier: Former S.C. State board chairman, business associate accused of racketeering in 52-count indictment

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20131107/PC16/131109519/1006/former-sc-state-board-chairman-business-associate-accused-of-racketeering-in-52-count-indictment>

Glenn Smith

Jonathan Pinson used his position as chairman of South Carolina State University's governing board to line his pockets with kickbacks and other ill-gotten rewards as he and business partners worked a series of shady deals from Florida to the Palmetto State, according to federal prosecutors. The allegations against the 43-year-old Greenville businessman are laid out in a dense, 52-count indictment unsealed Thursday in connection with an ongoing federal corruption probe at the Orangeburg college. The document seeks to tie Pinson and close friend Eric Robinson to a host of crimes, including mail and wire fraud, money laundering, extortion and bribery.

The Item: Accolades Continue To Grow For Sumter Native Lee Brice

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

Braden Bunch

For country music singer and Sumter native Lee Brice, the accolades continue to grow. Now, the 32-year-old also holds the reins on country Song of the Year, after "I Drive My Truck" from his latest album won the award Wednesday night at the 47th CMA awards. Despite his performance winning the award, Brice was quick to credit others for the accolades. "This award is completely about the song and the writers," Brice said. The song, written by the team of Ben Glover, Billy Montana and John Ozier, was actually competing with "Hard 2 Love," another performance from Brice's album of the same name. Brice said he felt the winning song, about a fallen soldier whose father still drives his truck, would connect with listeners the first time it was presented to him. "'I Drive Your Truck' blew my mind first time I heard it," he said.

Associated Press: Black Farmers Association meeting in Columbia

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=G9dZPifB

The National Black Farmers Association is targeting the future of its membership as it meets in South Carolina's capital city. President John Boyd says the 23rd annual meeting scheduled to start Friday is also

trying to get black youth interested in farming. The two-day conference will also commemorate payments going out to black farmers under a federal settlement over claims of decades of discrimination by the Department of Agriculture in awarding loans and other aid. Boyd says about 18,000 black farmers have started receiving payments of \$50,000 each, plus \$12,500 to cover their tax liability.

The State: SC Politics: Former State Representative Will Not Challenge GOP's Mulvaney

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

Former lawmaker will not run for Congress Boyd Brown says he will not challenge U.S. Rep. Mick Mulvaney, R-Indian Land, in South Carolina's 5th District congressional race. Brown, a former Democratic state representative from Fairfield County, earlier told The (Rock Hill) Herald that he was considering challenging Mulvaney, who ousted longtime Democratic U.S. Rep. John Spratt in 2010. However, Brown emailed several journalists Thursday to say that, while many people had asked him to run, "I am not, nor will I be a candidate for Congress."

Local News:

Florence Morning News: Georgetown festival will benefit Front Street fire victims

http://www.scnow.com/news/local/article_798e4f64-47f9-11e3-8026-0019bb30f31a.html

Christopher McKagen

Georgetown residents announced Thursday morning a fundraising event to aid those affected by September's Front Street Fire that destroyed several businesses, and organizers have called upon some rather famous friends for help. The first "Cornhole and Music Festival" will be held Nov. 23 in historic downtown Georgetown, featuring live bands and some heavy-hitting celebrities. Georgetown's own Ervin "Blue Print" Parker, who played several seasons in the NFL, is helping to steer the festival's planning.

The State: More Charges Filed Against Columbia Mayor's Former Business Partner

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

John Monk

New federal criminal charges were filed Thursday against Greenville businessmen Jonathon Pinson and Eric Robinson, some in connection with Columbia's multimillion dollar Village at River's Edge development. In a 69-page federal grand jury indictment that cites more than a dozen wiretaps, the U.S. Attorney's office in Columbia is now charging Pinson, 43, with 51 counts of various kinds of fraud and illegal activities and Robinson, 43, with 11 counts. The indictment alleges Pinson – former chairman of S.C. State University's board of trustees – and Robinson used their political and personal connections and business expertise to commit a host of white collar crimes.

Florence Morning News: Pigate affirmed as Timmonsville councilman; mayor runoff set

http://www.scnow.com/news/politics/article_e2822266-4812-11e3-a47a-001a4bcf6878.html

Gavin Jackson

The Board of Canvassers certified Tuesday's election results for the Timmonsville Town Council race and reaffirmed Councilman James D. Pigate Sr. as the winner of the third town council seat after a recount Thursday. The recount showed no difference in the original votes with Woodrow Thomas Jr. receiving 261 votes, Penny Hayes receiving 201 votes, Councilman James D. Pigate Sr. receiving 178 votes and Councilman Marvin Burno receiving 177 votes. Since Pigate and Burno were within a percentage point of each other, the recount was initiated, not a runoff per state law, Florence County Voter Registration and Election Commission Director David Alford.

National News:

Associated Press: Obama apologizes to people losing health coverage

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268798/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=767irp9V

Julie Pace

Bowing to intense criticism, President Barack Obama apologized to Americans who are losing health insurance plans he repeatedly said they could keep and pledged to find fixes that might allow people to keep their coverage. "I am sorry that they are finding themselves in this situation based on assurances they got from me," he said in an interview Thursday with NBC News. He added: "We've got to work hard to make sure that they know we hear them, and we are going to do everything we can to deal with folks who find themselves in a tough position as a consequence of this."

Associated Press: US Rep. Coble announces he won't seek re-election

http://www.scnw.com/news/politics/article_db583fa2-47e5-11e3-b35a-001a4bcf6878.html

U.S. Rep. Howard Coble, the longest-serving GOP House member in North Carolina history, said Thursday that his 15th term in Congress will be his last. In announcing his decision not to seek re-election in 2014, Coble, 82, said he's mentally sharp, but recent back problems and skin cancer worry him about whether he can keep up with a 2014 campaign. He has been in and out of the hospital for the past few years for a variety of ailments, including a respiratory infection, dizziness and back surgery. "I just fear that I would be limited physically and serve no good purpose," Coble said at a news conference at Guilford County Republican headquarters, where an audience of about 200 gave him a standing ovation.

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