

Title: **Don't waste South Carolina's untapped energy**
 Author:
 Size: 26.50 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Don't waste South Carolina's untapped energy

At a recent rally in Beaufort, environmental activists and local residents voiced their opposition to developing our offshore energy resources. Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling said he sees "no need for oil exploration and drilling."

Such critics certainly mean well. But in rejecting offshore energy, Keyserling and his allies aren't protecting our state's future; they're jeopardizing it. The development of offshore oil and gas promises to deliver new jobs and economic growth to South Carolina for decades to come.

While the state economy has shown improvement, South Carolinians have not fully recovered from the great recession. At 6.7 percent, our unemployment rate has yet to return to its 2007 lows.

Fortunately, our state soon may be able to put the recession's lingering effects behind us. The U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management recently granted permission for surveyors to look for energy deposits along the S.C. coast. The ruling is the first step toward unlocking some of our state's most valuable resources.

A study by Quest Offshore predicts that offshore oil and gas development will create more than 35,000 state jobs over the next two decades. During that same period, energy exploration and production

projects would add \$2.7 billion to our state economy.

The economic benefits won't flow just to energy workers. Thanks to an increased demand for oil- and gas-related equipment, the Quest study concludes that manufacturers will see roughly \$200 million a year in new business in 2035.

The potential to revitalize South Carolina's economy hasn't been lost on state leaders. Gov. Nikki Haley, U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham and U.S. Rep. Jeff Duncan have expressed vocal support for developing offshore resources. As U.S. Sen. Tim Scott recently put it, "Safe, responsible energy production has the ability to transform our economy."

South Carolina's voters also have recognized the importance of offshore development, with 71 percent supporting the practice, according to a January poll.

Once developed, the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf — which includes the areas off the S.C. coast — is expected to provide 1.3 million barrels of oil a day by 2035.

The benefits are hard to exaggerate. By tapping into our state's vast energy resources, we have a chance to breathe new life into the economy and create tens of thousands of jobs — all while fortifying our nation's energy security.

KAY CLAMP
 Executive director
 S.C. Petroleum Council
 Columbia



Clamp

Title: **Senate grills DHEC nominee at hearings**
 Author: BY JEREMY BORDEN jborden@postandcourier.com
 Size: 43.4 square inch
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



Senate grills DHEC nominee at hearings

BY JEREMY BORDEN
jborden@postandcourier.com

COLUMBIA — A Senate committee grilled the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's nominee on Thursday about a campaign fundraiser she held for her longtime friend Gov. Nikki Haley and whether DHEC improperly offered her the job.

On the first day of her confirmation hearings, Democratic senators asked nominee Eleanor Kitzman about a fundraiser for Haley that she attended in Texas in 2011. They also asked Kitzman if her relationship with the governor contributed to her nomination.

Kitzman assured senators she would remain independent of any political influence if confirmed.

"I am a Republican," Kitzman said. "I generally support Republican philosophies and positions and candidates. I do not allow that to affect the way I do my job."

Sen. Darrell Jackson, D-Hopkins, wanted to know how involved Kitzman was in the Texas fundraiser, particularly whether she had encouraged other donors to attend.

Initially, Kitzman denied influencing anyone else's attendance, but later backtracked, saying she needed to check to be sure.

"As a manager of something as important as DHEC, would you be concerned if a person had problems remembering a whole lot of things?" Jackson asked.

In the weeks since Haley nominated Kitzman to replace Catherine Templeton as head of

DHEC, a sprawling agency that oversees the health care industry and environmental issues, senators have voiced concerns about her qualifications and political connections.

The questioning Thursday lived up to senators' stated intention to thoroughly scrutinize Haley's nominees, although Susan Alford, the new head of the troubled Department of Social Services, breezed through the confirmation hearings.

Haley first broached the job with Kitzman in December of last year, Kitzman testified. Soon after, she asked Kitzman if she would be interested in the DHEC position and an interview with the DHEC board was scheduled. Kitzman was soon offered the post.

Sen. Kevin Johnson, D-Manning, compared that to the selection of former DHEC director Catherine Templeton, who was chosen from 300 applicants after a four-month search, he said. A DHEC spokeswoman has said the agency did not consider other candidates.

Kitzman repeatedly told senators that she could not speak for DHEC's search process.

Democratic senators also said they were concerned that Kitzman had made numerous amendments to her background paperwork submitted to the Senate. Kitzman said that her original disclosure form to the Senate committee was "substantially correct" but that she may have interpreted questions too narrowly and later expanded the report.

Kitzman had corrected and

amended a Senate questionnaire more than 30 times two days before her confirmation hearing, including a disclosure that she wrote a bad check and that a court filed action against her for unpaid student loans, according to a summary document.

"Out of an abundance of caution I wanted to do that because I have nothing to hide,"

Kitzman said.

Kitzman, a one-time lieutenant governor candidate, recently assumed a high-paying interim position at the Department of Health and Environmental Control as she awaited confirmation. She previously served under Haley as the director of the Budget and Control Board.

Former Gov. Mark Sanford had appointed Kitzman as the state's insurance commissioner in 2005.

A year later, Kitzman faced criticism from state lawmakers for her handling of soaring insurance rates for coastal homeowners after Hurricane Katrina. Kitzman left Sanford's administration in 2007.

Former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who wrote a recommendation for her, appointed Kitzman state insurance commissioner, but the Texas Senate refused to confirm her over concerns that she failed to protect consumers, according to a Dallas Morning News report.

Kitzman's confirmation hearing is scheduled to resume Tuesday.

Title: **Senate grills DHEC nominee at hearings**
Author: BY JEREMY BORDEN jborden@postandcourier.com
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palmettopolitics.com.



Kitzman

Title: **Governor's income tax cut sidelines road funding plans**
 Author: BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN crolدان@postandcourier.com
 Size: 28.36 square inch
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



Governor's income tax cut sidelines road funding plans

BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN
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COLUMBIA — Attempts to marry two competing roads plans have failed so far in the South Carolina House, delaying efforts to come up with a plan to fund the state's decaying roads and bridges.

Two bills filed in the House calling for changes to the way South Carolina taxes drivers have taken a backseat, as House members chip away at writing the state's \$7 billion budget, which is expected to hit the floor the second week of March.

That means that the road bills will be discussed at the committee level, but it's unlikely that they'll make it to the floor for discussion until after the House passes the budget. That delay concerns Rep. Russell Ott, D-St. Matthews, a member of the ad hoc committee that spent nearly six months studying fixes for the state's roads and bridges.

"I think that roads should be priority," said Ott, adding that

it's the No. 1 concern for his constituents. "I don't want it to lose momentum. People need to keep talking about these things."

Ott said attempts to accommodate the governor's income tax, road-funding proposal are to blame for the delays. He added he still hopes a measure will pass the House this year, but those chances drop as the longer it takes for the House to discuss them.

Gov. Nikki Haley's road plan calls for raising the tax on gasoline by 10 cents a gallon over three years while reducing the state income tax from 7 percent to 5 percent over 10 years. It also calls for restructuring the Department of Transportation.

Rep. Gary Simrill, R-Rock Hill, who introduced the committee's proposal as a bill, said he doesn't see less of a momentum for roads.

The issue is still "very important," he said, adding that he would've preferred if the issue had been taken up before the budget became a priority.

The bill introduced by Simrill calls for a reduction of the state's 16.75-cent-per-gallon gas tax with an increase in the sales tax on gasoline at the wholesale level.

It will have a ceiling to protect South Carolinians from fluctuating gas prices and would phase in turning over ownership and maintenance of state-owned roads to counties, if they so choose. And it also calls for changes at DOT.

But the committee was responsible for infrastructure reform and funding, not tax reform, Simrill said.

"There are many more things in our bills that are alike than there are different," Simrill said. "The difference is that hers has an income tax component to it. After her State of the State, we set out to see if those two could be merged, and at the end of the day we could not come to an agreement on the income tax portion of it. So you have two bills and the merits of those two bills will be debated in subcommittee."

Title: **Stupid remarks cut to bone of real problem in sexist South Carolina**

Author:

Size: 49.6 square inch

Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



Stupid remarks cut to bone of real problem in sexist South Carolina

Who knew state Sen. Tom Corbin was such an accomplished butcher?

It's not so much that he is a pro at accurately judging cuts of meat — he's just proven extremely skilled at turning an apology into a hatchet job.

Earlier this week, Corbin stood on the Senate floor and said he was sorry for his offensive, bone-headed and sexist remarks

aimed at Sen. Katrina Shealy.

See, Corbin called Shealy — and women in general — a “lesser cut of meat” while dining at a Columbia restaurant last week.

This was after the ribs arrived at the table, and it reminded him — biblical scholar that he is — how Eve was made from Adam's rib.

At the same time, Corbin made a crack about how it had taken two years, but he'd finally got Shealy wearing shoes.

Classy.

So Corbin publicly apologized. But then he had to go and get defensive. He noted that he and Shealy, his desk-

mate, always kid each other — she teases him all the time about being fat and bald.

He left out “stupid.”

And even as Corbin conceded his joke was in “poor taste” in one breath, in the next he blamed Shealy for this story going national.

“She chose to be offended and make a big deal out of all this,” Corbin said.

Sort of like people in Travelers Rest chose to elect this Neanderthal.

Double standard?

It's not exactly a news flash that the whole “blame the victim” line of thinking is alive and well in South Carolina.

That was clear when Corbin said that Shealy “stuck a knife in his back” just because he disagrees with her position that people convicted of criminal domestic violence should have their right to bear arms revoked for awhile.

Let's get this straight: In Corbin's mind, some guy who beats the life out of a woman needs the state to protect his right to have ready access to firearms.

Why, senator, so he can finish the job?

How about the rights of women, who in South Carolina are in more danger from men than in any other state in the nation?

Do they not deserve protection?

You know, Corbin doesn't belong in the state Senate — he needs to be on a road crew. Because when he's in a hole, he obviously keeps digging.

One of the most depressing things here is that Corbin thought it was OK to joke around like this at all. What does he think would have happened if he'd suggested the votes of his African-American Senate colleagues should only count three-fifths as much as his?

If he'd made that joke, Corbin would be cleaning out his office in Columbia right now.

And he knows it — society has finally made it perfectly clear that's not acceptable.

So why is it acceptable to make similarly derogatory remarks about women?

Well, senator, it's not.

Address the real problem

Shealy says she accepted Corbin's tepid apology because she wants to move on.

The senator says she has told Corbin in the past that she didn't like the way he kidded around, although Corbin says he didn't recall any such complaints.

“We cut up together,” he

says.

So that makes it OK? If you were embarrassed by the national attention, and shame, this has brought upon South Carolina, Corbin says to get over it — it was just a joke.

But most people aren't laughing.

There is one good thing about this whole unfortunate incident. It should force the Legislature to take a good look at attitudes in this state — and at the Statehouse.

Gov. Nikki Haley at times has been treated with outright disdain by lawmakers. Sure, some of that is just politics — but you can bet there's an element of it that's gender-related.

Luckily, Haley and Shealy have proven remarkably adept at taking care of themselves. Other women are not so fortunate. So the Legislature needs to get serious and pass more severe penalties for people convicted of criminal domestic violence.

This ridiculous incident has proven there are still a lot of backward-thinking lunkheads in this state who believe it's acceptable to treat women as pieces of beef.

And yes, that includes you, Sen. Meathead.

Reach **Brian Hicks** at bhicks@postandcourier.com.

Title: **Stupid remarks cut to bone of real problem in sexist South Carolina**

Author:

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Corbin



BRIAN HICKS

Title: **Haley's DHEC pick faces tough Senate**

Author:

Size: 7.90 square inch

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SOUTH CAROLINA

Haley's DHEC pick faces tough Senate

COLUMBIA — Eleanor Kitzman is insisting to senators she'll remain independent of her longtime friend, Gov.

Nikki Haley, if she's confirmed as director of South Carolina's public health and environmental agency.

Kitzman faces a tough confirmation process in the Senate. Hearings began Thursday.

Senators question why

Kitzman was the only candidate for running one of the state's largest agencies, particularly when she has no background in health care or the environment.

Kitzman says she told Haley last November she was return-

ing to South Carolina. Haley later asked if she'd be interested in leading the Department of Health and Environmental Control. When she said yes, her friend gave her name to the board chairman. Haley appoints all board members.

Title: **MakesureUber meetsstandards**

Author:

Size: 7.90 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Make sure Uber meets standards

Shouldn't Gov. Nikki Haley, Rep. Leon Stavrinakis and Sen. Kevin Bryant be supportive of the health and safety of state residents? It seems anyone using a transportation service would want it to be safe and have drivers checked before they're allowed to operate in our state.

Phrases such as "business friendly," "consumer's choice" and "no government interference" are plain wrong. Let's make sure Uber or anyone transporting people meets all necessary requirements to do it safely.

State regulators should do their job and not be intimidated by politicians who don't seem to care about our health and safety. Uber has shown us it simply ignores safety issues and doesn't check drivers close enough.

LEWIS SMITH
Little Mountain

Title: **Loss of DHEC nominee revives breakup talks**
 Author: By Sammy Fretwell and Andrew Shain sfretwell@thestate.com ashain@thestate.com
 Size: 35.96 square inch
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Loss of DHEC nominee revives breakup talks

**Kitzman withdraws
after confirmation
hearing last week**

By SAMMY FRETWELL
AND ANDREW SHAIN
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COLUMBIA A tense Senate hearing that apparently prompted the withdrawal of the candidate to run South Carolina's environmental and health agency has rekindled talk of breaking up the department and dispersing its duties to other state agencies.

A day after Eleanor Kitman pulled her name from consideration as director, Sen. Harvey Peeler, R-Gaffney, said he'll introduce a bill next month to eliminate the Department of Health and Environmental Control.

After Kitman's lengthy confirmation hearing last Thursday, Peeler said no one can fill the job at DHEC, an agency with so many different responsibilities.

Almost from its inception in the early 1970s, DHEC has been criticized because its duties combine that of a state public health department with that of an environmental protection agency. It is one of South Carolina's largest departments with about

3,500 workers, regulating everything from hospital expansions to pollution discharges.

The DHEC board will meet Wednesday to discuss finding a new director for the post vacated Jan. 8 by Catherine Templeton. In addition to withdrawing Sunday night because of "recent events," Kitman also quit a temporary DHEC job that was paying her about \$3,500 for just over a week's work.

Under the plan, DHEC's health work would go to the Department of Health and Human Services, while its environmental oversight would go to either the Department of Natural Resources or Department of Agriculture, said Peeler, a supporter of Gov. Nikki Haley.

Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, and John Courson, R-Richland, said Peeler's idea to break up DHEC is a good one because the agency is unwieldy. But Columbia Democratic Sens. Joel Lourie and

Darrell Jackson said the Kitman issue boiled down to her lack of qualifications – not the structure of the agency.

Kitman, a former state insurance commissioner in South Carolina and Texas, had no experience in environment or health matters. She ran into criticism in Texas over her fundraising efforts and her ties to the insurance industry.

But the DHEC board picked her in early January without seeking other applications for the more than \$150,000 per-year post vacated by Templeton.

Haley recommended Kitman, who is a friend, political ally and campaign contributor to the governor, and said she would make a good director. The board chose Kitman four days after Templeton resigned Jan. 8.

In a letter Sunday to DHEC board chairman Allen Amsler, Kitman said she was dropping out. She said a protracted confirmation hearing for her would not

benefit the agency's employees, stakeholders or the public.

Kitman was grilled for four hours last week about her lack of background in environmental and health matters, as well as conflicting statements Democratic senators said she made to the legislative screening committee.

More intense questioning was expected this week from senators critical of her lack of experience and varying statements.

Jackson and Lourie said the Senate screening process did what it was supposed to do: expose candidates who are unqualified to oversee state agencies.

Jackson and Lourie agreed the bar is higher for DHEC than some other agencies because the department's duties

can affect people's health. Under state law, the Senate must confirm nominees to run many state agencies. It rarely turns one down.

Title: **DHEC to meet on director following Kitzman's withdrawal**
 Author: Associated Press
 Size: 11.93 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



DHEC to meet on director following Kitzman's withdrawal

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Eleanor Kitzman left her temporary job with South Carolina's public health and environmental control agency, a day after withdrawing from consideration to be its director.

Department of Health and Environmental Control spokeswoman Cassie Harris said Monday was Kitzman's last day.

Kitzman began working Jan. 26 as director of performance improvement, making \$74.50 an hour without benefits,

while awaiting the confirmation process. Kitzman was the lone candidate considered for the job after Gov. Nikki Haley gave the name of her longtime friend to the board's chairman. Haley appoints the entire board.

Kitzman withdrew Sunday, days after facing tough questions from senators about her relationship with Haley and the selection process. Questioning was expected to continue Tuesday.

DHEC's board has called a special meeting Wednesday to discuss the next director.

Title: **Three GOP governors express frustration with Washington**
 Author: By Mary Troyan USA Today
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Three GOP governors express frustration with Washington

By Mary Troyan

USA Today

WASHINGTON — Feuds in Washington over health care and immigration are dumping expensive and complicated federal problems into the laps of governors, three Republican governors from the South complained Monday.

After meeting with President Barack Obama at the White House, the governors of Tennessee, South Carolina and North Carolina expressed their frustration with a number of problems, including the country's 11 million undocumented immigrants and a legal challenge to the Affordable Care Act that could eliminate the federal subsidies people use to buy health insurance.

"These food fights here in Washington are sadly relevant to us," said North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory. "We are the ones

who pick up the litter back home."

In a press event organized by the Republican Governors Association, the three state leaders urged the White House and Congress to take responsibility for problems that could tax state budgets if left unresolved.

"How much more baggage are we going to have to continue to accept?" said South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley.

Gov. Bill Haslam of Tennessee, chairman of the RGA, said Obama's executive order protecting up to 4 million undocumented immigrants from deportation derailed chances for a broader immigration solution.

"My biggest frustration is, when he issued that executive order, it was like rolling a hand grenade in the room. It blew up any discussion that could have

happened," Haslam said.

Republicans in Congress are refusing to pass a fiscal 2015 spending bill for the Homeland Security Department unless it includes provisions blocking Obama's order. A lawsuit filed by Texas seeks the same goal. Tennessee, South Carolina and North Carolina are among the 25 states joining Texas in the case.

Haley said she wants law enforcement in South Carolina to be able to locate undocumented immigrants and refer them to federal immigration officials for deportation.

"What governors have to deal with is a lot of undocumented workers, and we're having to educate them and give health care to them," Haley said. "We

"What governors have to deal with is a lot of undocumented workers, and we're having to educate them and give health care to them."

**SOUTH CAROLINA
GOV. NIKKI HALEY**

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GOVERNORS

Continued from Page 3A

continue to pay for these services and we're not getting anything in response."

The Pew Research Center estimates there are about 95,000 undocumented workers in South Carolina, or about 2 percent of the state's population.

Earlier Monday, Obama met with all the nation's governors at the White House. He called the stalemate over Homeland Security funding and immigration policy a "self-inflicted wound" that will hurt states if the agency has to shut down. More than 100,000 Home-

land Security employees will have to work without pay unless Congress approves funding by midnight Friday.

"They all work in your states," Obama said. "It will have a direct impact on

your economy and it will have a direct impact on America's national security."

On the health care front, the Supreme Court is being asked to rule that the subsidies created under the Affordable Care Act are invalid in states — including Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina — that opted to use the federal government's online insurance marketplace instead of creating their

own exchanges. Without the subsidies, health insurance would be unaffordable for many people.

The governors said it's up to Congress and the White House to prepare a response if the justices strike down the subsidies in those states. The court hears arguments in the case next week.

"I think in Washington, they're just waiting," McCrory said. "We as governors want to be proactive and anticipate, as opposed to react."

■ Contact Mary Troyan at mtroyan@usatoday.com

Title: **Senator's sexist joke spurs State House debate**
 Author: By Jamie Self jself@thestate.com
 Size: 127.87 square inch
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Senator's sexist joke spurs State House debate

Shealy, S.C.'s only female senator, spoke publicly about offense

By JAMIE SELF
jself@thestate.com

A male senator's offensive joke to South Carolina's only female senator is driving a debate about sexism under the State House dome.

That debate is unfolding as more women than ever before hold seats in the state Legislature.

Those numbers have ticked up in recent years, slowly lifting South Carolina from dead last to 47th in state rankings by the Center for American Women in Politics for the percentage of women who hold office in state legislatures.

Allegations of sexism have rattled the State House before.

In 2001, for example, an anonymous memo directed female House pages to wear revealing blouses, consider underwear "optional" and view terms such as "babe," "honey," "sugar" and "little missy" as compliments and "terms of endearment."

In 2010, then-state Rep. Nikki Haley was accused of having an extramarital affair. The allegations came, some noted suspiciously, just as the little-known legislator was

taking the lead in a heated primary race for the GOP's gubernatorial nomination. In 2012, Gov. Haley riled critics by calling a Charleston

reporter a "little girl." Haley later said she regretted her choice of words.

The focus of last week's controversy was a "joke" that state Sen. Tom Corbin, R-Greenville, made while at dinner with lawmakers, in-

SEE **WOMEN**, PAGE 2B

S.C. women in politics

Eighty-nine women have been elected to the S.C. General Assembly:

1928: First woman wins election to the General Assembly; Mary Ellis of Jasper County beats a Senate incumbent and serves one term.

11: Number of women ever elected to the 46-member S.C. Senate; Katrina Shealy, R-Lexington, is the 11th.

9: Number of women elected to the 170-member General Assembly between 1928 and 1970.

23: Number of women in the General Assembly today.

Five S.C. women have been elected to statewide offices:

Nikki Haley, R-Lexington: Governor, 2011-present

Molly Spearman, R-Saluda: Superintendent of education, 2015-present

Inez Tenenbaum, D-Lexington: Superintendent of education, 1999-2007

Barbara Nielsen, R-Beaufort: Superintendent of education, 1991-99

Nancy Stevenson, D-Charleston: Lieutenant governor, 1979-82

WOMEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

cluding state Sen. Katrina Shealy, R-Lexington, the Senate's only female member.

Corbin said he repeated "an old joke" that women are a "lesser cut of meat," a biblical reference to Eve being created from Adam's rib.

After media reports, Corbin apologized publicly Tuesday in the Senate.

Shealy followed Corbin's comments with her own, warning women they will face obstacles to success.

"(T)hese ... remarks are never acceptable in public or in private," Shealy said, her voice wavering. "We are

all created equal and, as such, deserve respect."

'Set the record straight'

Women who have served in the General Assembly applauded Shealy for speaking out.

"Sometimes, women need to stand up and set the record straight," said Molly Spearman, a former state representative who became the fifth South Carolina woman ever to win a statewide office in November, when she was elected state education superintendent.

"Sometimes, men forget that some things that are said in a joking way may not

come across that way."

Spearman and other women who have been in the Legislature said their interactions with male lawmakers have been mostly professional.

But some said they have, from time to time, experienced a different kind of disrespect from male colleagues.

"Some male colleagues say, 'Oh, you look pretty today,' 'Oh, you look good today,' 'Oh, you smell good,'" said state Rep. Mia McLeod, D-Richland.

McLeod used to answer compliments about her looks by asking, "Would you say that to your male col-

league?"

Now, she said she lets those comments go, adding they let her know what others really think.

Spearman recalled "one older gentleman" from "another era" who sometimes said inappropriate things to her.

"I finally had to say something to him," she said, not wanting to name the now-deceased legislator. "I took care of it if it went over the line."

Paid her dues

The path female legislators are carving out in South Carolina politics is not well-worn, compared to the one their male counterparts follow.

Title: **Senator's sexist joke spurs State House debate**
 Author: By Jamie Self jself@thestate.com
 Size: 127.87 square inch
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The S.C. Legislature has 170 members. But Shealy is one of just 89 female legislators ever elected to the General Assembly since Mary Gordon Ellis of Jasper County became the first, winning a Senate seat in 1928.

This year, Shealy is one of 23 women in the General Assembly – the most who ever have been in office at the same time. All but Shealy are in the 124-member House.

Elected after a tough fight against longtime GOP state Sen. Jake Knotts, Shealy's 2012 win ended a four-year span when no women held a seat in the Senate.

No more than three women have ever held seats at the same time in the state's 46-member upper legislative chamber.

Changes come slowly.

This year, nine-term state Rep. Rita Allison, R-Spartanburg, was appointed to chair the House Education and Public Works Committee – a rare leadership position for a woman to hold.

When House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, initially called her about the job, Allison said she thought he was going to ask her for a reference for someone else.

"But when he asked me to take it, I was very honored and humbled," she said. "But I wanted to think

through it."

Allison said her hesitation was because she "didn't want to let down (her) gender" or take a position she was not ready for. But after a week or so, Allison decided she had "paid her dues," working on the House's budget panel and asking for leadership roles and positions that would expand her knowledge.

As a female legislator, Allison thought she had to be proactive about gaining experience.

"There are fewer of us than our male counterparts, so we do double time to make sure our voices are heard."

Breaking the glass ceiling

Breaking into higher offices is tough for South Carolina women.

Only five have won election to statewide offices. Haley became the fourth with her wins in 2010 and 2014, making history as the state's first female minority governor.

Spearman, also a Republican, became the fifth to win a state position when she took office this year as education superintendent.

Another five South Carolina women have won seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

But four of those women were widows of congressmen, urged to run to finish

their deceased husbands' terms – a Southern tradition known as the "widow's mandate" where both political parties nominate the deceased man's wife to complete his term as a gesture of sympathy.

Only one South Carolina congresswoman, Democrat Liz Patterson of Spartanburg, did not follow in her husband's footsteps. But Patterson was the daughter of former South Carolina Gov. Olin Johnston, who also served in the U.S. Senate for 20 years.

After winning the 4th District seat in 1986, Patterson served three terms in Congress. She lost the seat in 1992 to Republican Bob Inglis.

'It's not funny'

Shealy said she had a tough time addressing the full Senate Tuesday about Corbin's remark, which she said she would rather put behind her.

"It was hard, just to stand up there and talk about it," Shealy said Friday. "I didn't want to keep drawing attention to it. There are more important things to do in the Senate."

But someone at the dinner leaked the comments to a reporter, Shealy said, and she thought it important to respond publicly.

Shealy said she also has received support from male colleagues in the Senate, including Majority Leader Harvey Peeler, R-Cherokee.

Peeler said Shealy does not want special treatment. She only wants to be treated the same as men in the Senate.

For example, Peeler said he wants senators, when addressing the body, to address the Senate's president and "members," not "gentleman and lady," as is common now.

Peeler also said he gave Corbin the "benefit of the doubt" that he did not intend to be insulting with his comment. But, he added, "When you tell a joke and no one laughs, odds are, it's not funny."

Corbin followed with an "unsuccessful attempt at apologizing," Peeler said.

Miffed that Shealy chose to speak about the issue on the Senate floor after his apology, Corbin told The State that Shealy "chose to be offended and make a big deal out of all this."

Then, Corbin said Shealy likely really was angry at him for fighting gun restrictions in a domestic violence bill that she is pushing.

That comment, Shealy said, angered her even more.

"It took away his apology."

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TRACY GLANTZ - tglantz@thestate.com

Sen. Katrina Shealy, R-Lexington, spoke out in the Senate after Sen. Tom Corbin, R-Greenville, standing right, made an offensive joke about women that was leaked to the media.



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Sen. Katrina Shealy, R-Lexington, said, after a sexist joke was made in her presence, "We are all created equal and, as such, deserve respect."