

Title: **S.C. politicians totackle state retirement system**  
 Author: BY JAMIESELF jself@thestate.com  
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## S.C. politicians to tackle state retirement system

BY JAMIE SELF

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COLUMBIA

S.C. House and Senate leaders are forming a committee to review the state retirement system's unfunded obligations of \$16.75 billion.

The panel is charged with finding ways for the pension system to meet its obligations for upcoming years.

The move comes three months after Republican S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley pledged to address the pension system's unfunded obligations, adding the fix would "hurt."

S.C. House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, and Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, said Wednesday the bi-partisan committee – of six senators and six representatives – would begin meeting next month.

Lucas noted thousands of South Carolinians contribute to the retirement system "with the hope of receiving a positive return in the future" and entrust the state with investing their money "wisely."

Last month, the S.C. Fiscal Accountability Authority

approved a 0.5 percent increase in the amount the state's more than 200,000 employees pay into the retirement system. The state and the cities, counties and other institutions that public-sector employees work for also will be required to pay 0.5 percent more. But that increase gets nowhere near solving the pension system's problems, critics and the officials who run the retirement system have said.

Officials with the state Public Employee Benefit Authority, which runs the state's retirement system, laid out several scenarios in April to help pay down the retirement system's unfunded obligations.

The scenarios include requiring state employees to pay as much as 12 percent of their salaries annually into retirement. Those workers now pay close to 9 percent of their salaries after the July 1 increase took effect. Advocates for state employees have said they already pay too much, leaving the state at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to hiring.

Title: **Mercedes-Benz Vans breaks ground on \$500M U.S. plant**  
 Author: BY BRUCESMITH Associated Press  
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## Mercedes-Benz Vans breaks ground on \$500M U.S. plant

BY BRUCE SMITH  
 Associated Press

NORTH CHARLESTON

Prompted by growing North American demand for its vans, Mercedes-Benz Vans broke ground Wednesday on a new \$500 million U.S. assembly plant in South Carolina.

The site is next to an existing plant where, for the past decade, the company has put Sprinter vans made in Germany back together after being disassembled and shipped to this country because of the high duties on importing finished vehicles.

"The logistics process is a nightmare," Volker Mornhinweg, the head of Mercedes-Benz Vans, told reporters.

In the existing factory the parts and bodies of the vans, shipped through the Port of Charleston, are reassembled in a process that takes four to five hours.

During the past decade, Mercedes-Benz Vans has been gauging the North American market for its vans and sales have been growing. Last year the company delivered 28,600 vans to customers in the United States, an increase of 11 percent over 2014.

After Germany, the United States is the largest market for the vans.

"Now the time is mature that we can build a full-fledged facility here for the North American market," Mornhinweg said.

The new plant will add more than 1 million square feet to the existing 400,000 square-foot facility. It is expected to employ 1,300 workers and the company says it should mean 400 additional jobs for parts suppliers in the area.

Mornhinweg said that in addition to growing demand, the company selected North Charleston because it already has 200 trained workers and owned property to expand at the site.

He said for competitive reasons, the company was not announcing exactly when the plant to open or how many vans it will produce each year.

Gov. Nikki Haley, who appeared with U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham and other state and local officials at the event, thanked the company. "We will keep you ahead of schedule," she said.

Title: **Lawmakers to tackle pension problems**  
 Author: BY JAMIESELF [jself@thestate.com](mailto:jself@thestate.com)  
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## SC RETIREMENT SYSTEM

# Lawmakers to tackle pension problems

BY JAMIE SELF  
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S.C. House and Senate leaders are forming a committee to review the state retirement system's unfunded obligations of \$16.75 billion.

The panel is charged with finding ways for the pension system to meet its obligations in years to come.

The move comes three months after Republican S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley pledged to address the pension system's unfunded obligations, adding the fix would "hurt."

S.C. House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, and Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, said Wednesday the bi-partisan committee – of six senators and six representatives – would begin meeting next month.

Lucas noted thousands of South Carolinians contribute to the retirement system "with the hope of

receiving a positive return in the future" and entrust the state with investing their money "wisely."

"We owe it to them (state employees) to honor our commitments," Lucas said.

"I'm confident we'll roll up our sleeves, work together and make sure South Carolina honors its obligations in a fiscally responsible way," Leatherman said.

Last month, the S.C. Fiscal Accountability Authority approved a 0.5 percent increase in the amount the state's more than 200,000 employees pay into the retirement system. The state and the cities, counties and other public institutions that public-sector employees work for also will be required to pay 0.5 percent more.

But that increase gets nowhere near solving the pension system's prob-

lems, critics and the officials who run the retirement system have said.

Officials with the state Public Employee Benefit Authority, which runs the state's retirement system, laid out several scenarios in April to help pay down the retirement system's unfunded obligations.

The scenarios include requiring state employees to pay as much as 12 percent of their salaries annually into the retirement system. Those workers now pay close to 9 percent of their salaries after the July 1 increase took effect.

Advocates for state employees have said they already pay too much, leaving the state at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to hiring talented workers.

Members of the Joint Committee on Pension Reform are: Reps. Mike Anthony, D-Union; Jeff Bradley, R-Beaufort; Gilda Cobb-Hunter, D-Orange-

burg; Bill Herbkersman, R-Beaufort; Tommy Stringer, R-Greenville; Bill Whitmire, R-Oconee; and Sens. Sean Bennett, R-Dorchester; Kevin Bryant, R-Anderson; Mike Gambrell, R-Anderson; Darrell Jackson, D-Richland; Sen. Floyd Nicholson, D-Greenwood; and Vincent Sheheen, D-Kershaw.

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**WE OWE IT TO THEM (STATE EMPLOYEES) TO HONOR OUR COMMITMENTS.**

– S.C. House Speaker Jay Lucas

Title: **U.S., Columbia chambers to hold veterans job fair at Fort Jackson**  
Author: BYJEFF WILKINSON jwilkinson@thestate.com  
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# U.S., Columbia chambers to hold veterans job fair at Fort Jackson

BY JEFF WILKINSON  
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The U.S. and Columbia chambers of commerce, along with other partners, will host a job fair at Fort Jackson for active duty military personnel, veterans and their spouses on Tuesday.

The fifth annual Hiring Our Heroes-Columbia event is open to all veterans and spouses regardless of rank or branch, including National Guard members and reservists. About 100 local and national employers are expected to participate.

The job fairs held at the fort's Solomon Center have become more important in recent years because of budget cuts spurred by the drawdown of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, said retired Maj. Gen. George Goldsmith, chairman of the Columbia Chamber's military affairs committee.

"We are really committed to trying to help service members, particularly those getting out of service, because of the cut-backs," he said.

An 8:30 a.m. employment workshop will cover a variety of topics, including resume building,

networking and interview tips. Immediately following the workshop, volunteer career coaches will be available to all veterans who want to participate in mock interviews or create more effective resumes.

Hiring Our Heroes was launched in 2011. The first Hiring Our Heroes event in Columbia was held at Fort Jackson in 2012, kicked off by Gov. Nikki Haley.

The project is a nationwide initiative to help veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses find meaningful employment. It has helped hundreds of

## If you're going

**WHAT:** Hiring Our Heroes Columbia job fair

**WHEN:** Tuesday, Aug. 2. Workshop begins at 8:30 a.m.; job fair lasts from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Solomon Center, 6510 Strom Thurmond Blvd., Fort Jackson

**RSVP:** Pre-register online at [www.hiringourheroes.org](http://www.hiringourheroes.org). Veterans must provide proof of service.

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thousands of veterans and military spouses find meaningful employment.

Title: **Coleman to start as auditor for Laurens County**  
 Author: By CONOR HUGHES chughes@indexjournal.com  
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## Coleman to start as auditor for Laurens County

By **CONOR HUGHES**  
 chughes@indexjournal.com

Laurens County Council Chairman Jim Coleman is switching jobs, having become the county's auditor as of July 8 by way of an executive order signed by Gov. Nikki Haley.

Coleman is filling the vacancy left by Sally Lancaster's retirement. Coleman will serve out the remainder of Lancaster's term, which ends June 30, 2019.

Lancaster retired because of health problems, Coleman said.

Coleman defeated former Clinton Mayor David Tribble Jr. in a primary for the position and was running unopposed in the general election before the appointment.

Coleman served six terms on county council and said

he is grateful for the chance to re-enter county government.

"I've got a lot of knowledge on the work of the county government and it seemed to be a good opportunity," he said.

Coleman said that, as auditor, he hopes to give his staff the resources they need.

"There's a great staff in this office and I'm going to try my best to help them do their job," he said. "I want to make sure we have the latest in technology and that we're serving the public to the best of our ability."



**JIM**  
**COLEMAN**