

Title: **Pathway planned for tons of plutonium**
 Author: BY THOMAS GARDINER tgardiner@aikenstandard.com
 Size: 44.64 square inch
 Aiken, SC Circulation: 19635



Pathway planned for tons of plutonium

BY THOMAS GARDINER
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The U.S. Department of Energy formally signed a plan Wednesday to prepare and move 6 metric tons of plutonium from the Savannah River Site to a repository in New Mexico. The National Nuclear Security Ad-



Haley

ed nuclear material would be stored at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, or WIPP. The decision was first announced by Gov. Nikki Haley's office

ministration's official record of decision designates downblending and storage as the preferred plan for the material as part of the Surplus Plutonium Disposition Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement.

The downblended nuclear material would be stored at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, or WIPP. The decision was first announced by Gov. Nikki Haley's office

Tuesday night.

Downblending involves diluting plutonium and disposing of it at a repository.

The Environmental Impact Statement analyzed 13.1 metric tons of nuclear material that was deemed surplus in 2007, 6 tons of which are covered by this decision.

The official decision means that South Carolina will not become what Gov. Nikki Haley called a permanent dumping ground for nuclear materials in a letter to U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz.

Please see **PLAN**, Page 7A

PLAN

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Other options under the administration's consideration included a so-called do-nothing plan. That option meant that nuclear materials would have stayed in storage in South Carolina.

"As I've always said, we have the safest and best facilities at SRS to process the plutonium," said Mike Johnson, executive director of Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness.

"The DOE always needed to provide a pathway out of the state

for the material, and this provides a confirmed way out," he said.

According to Tom Clements, director of the nuclear watchdog group SRS Watch, there are approximately 125 containers from SRS already interred at the WIPP site and another 97 were in queue when a fire on a salt truck shut down operations in 2014.

No concrete dates have been announced for the site's reopening.

"This agreement indicates two things to me," Clements said.

"One, plutonium disposition is in chaos and any route has problems. Second, perhaps serious discussions are under way to move plutonium disposition forward."

As for the site, the newly inked decision means change is on the horizon.

"Implementing this mission will require the installation of new equipment at the site and the hiring and training of additional technical personnel," according to the statement released by the

NNSA.

"It does mean more work here," Johnson said. "It means that we've got to install facilities to go from laboratory-scale processing to industrial-scale processing."

Johnson and Clements both said processing levels at SRS are not currently at a level that would accommodate the preparations to move such a large amount of plutonium.

The materials specific to this part of the agreement are the



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non-weapons-grade materials at SRS which are not subject to the MOX agreement. The Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility, currently under construction at SRS, would convert weapons-grade plutonium into commercial nuclear fuel.

Although the two portions of the 13.1 metric tons of surplus plutonium are both part of the Environmental Impact Statement, the decisions to handle the different qualities of material have followed different paths.

However, with the recommended decommissioning of the MOX program by NNSA earlier this month and the official direction out of the state for the remaining materials, SRS could see even more changes in the future.

“Now, we’ve got to develop these processes,” Johnson said, noting the move to larger scale downblending operations. “I suspect that if it works for non-weapons-grade plutonium, that it would work for weapons grade as well.”

According to the NNSA statement, this also provides a disposition pathway for foreign plutonium brought to SRS.

That means the material currently en route from Japan and future shipments would have a precedent to follow.

A proposed timeline for the preferred disposition plan has not been made available, and it is unclear when implementation measures will begin.

Thomas Gardiner is the SRS

beat reporter for the *Aiken Standard*. Gardiner is a product of USC Aiken. Follow him on Twitter @TGardiner_AS.

Title: **Six candidates seek Sen. Scott's seat**

Author:

Size: 7.90 square inch

Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Six candidates seek Sen. Scott's seat

Election filing in South Carolina has closed and four candidates have filed to run against U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, who's seeking his first full term in Washington. Two South Carolina congressmen have primary challengers. Republican U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford faces state Rep. Jenny Horne of Summerville in the 1st Congressional District in the June primary. In the 5th District, incumbent Republican Mick Mulvaney faces Ray Craig of Lake Wylie. The other five incumbent U.S. House members will have major party opponents in November. Democrat Thomas Dixon and three third-party candidates are challenging Scott. Scott was appointed by Gov. Nikki Haley when Jim DeMint resigned in 2013. Scott was elected to the remaining two years of DeMint's term in 2014 and is seeking his first full term.

Title: **House proposes \$9M for teachers**
 Author: SEANNA ADCOX ASSOCIATED PRESS
 Size: 42.16 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



House proposes \$9M for teachers

SEANNA ADCOX

ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA - Teachers in 42 high-poverty school districts in South Carolina could get a salary boost under a one-year experiment advanced by the House.

The proposal would distribute \$9.1 million to districts where at least 80 percent of students live in poverty, with amounts ranging from roughly \$37,500 to \$1.3 million based on student population. Rising student poverty means just over half of districts would benefit.

District officials must use their allotment for "teacher recruitment and retention" but

how is up to them.

"It's wide open — whatever they need to do to keep teachers in their district," said Rep. Kenny Bingham, chairman of the House's K-12 budget panel.

Possibilities he cited include performance bonuses, hiring teachers in hard-to-fill subjects such as science and even paying teachers' moving costs.

The proposal is aimed at keeping good teachers in poor districts that can't pay as much as their more prosperous neighbors. Legislators would then evaluate next year whether the money made a difference be-

fore making it a recurring expense, said Bingham, R-Cayce.

The chairman of the Senate's K-12 budget panel said Tuesday he supports the idea, which the House passed unanimously last week as an amendment to its 2016-17 spending plan.

"It probably stands a good chance of staying in the budget," said Sen. Wes Hayes, R-Rock Hill.

The House budget plan would give teachers statewide a 2 percent cost-of-living in-

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Teachers

Continued from Page 3A

crease. The additional allotment could help answer the state Supreme Court's 2014 ruling that the state fails to provide educational opportunities in poor, rural districts that initially sued the state over funding in 1993. Legislators face a June deadline for developing a plan to fix South Carolina's broken education system.

Teacher quality was among the inequities justices' cited. Plaintiff districts pay the least. Filling vacancies often means hiring teachers who are inexperienced, uncertified and/or long-term substitutes who lack a college degree. Widespread teacher turnover compounds the problem, the justices wrote.

Even without the ruling,

legislators must do something to help poor districts hire and keep good teachers, Hayes said.

"Lawsuit or not, it's a real crisis in a lot of these districts," he said.

Kathy Maness, director of the Palmetto State Teachers Association, said she appreciates the legislators' efforts.

"I hope this \$9 million helps reward those teachers who districts know can go to another county and make \$10,000 more but are willing to make the drive because the students need them," she said.

The House budget plan also includes \$8.2 million toward a loan-forgiveness program advocated earlier this year by Gov. Nikki Haley. Students

could get up to \$30,000 worth of tuition loans erased if they commit to teaching eight years in a district with excessive teacher turnover. The 20 districts that currently meet the definition lost between 11 percent and 34 percent of their teachers last year.

Bingham said legislators recognized that program wasn't enough.

"That's great for new teachers going to a district, but what do we do for teachers already there? How are you going to retain them?" he said.

Under the House plan, districts' share of the \$9 million breaks down to \$53 per student. The largest chunk would go to Richland 1, the district for downtown Columbia — which

is clearly not rural — followed by Sumter County, Darlington County, Cherokee County, and Lexington 2 (West Columbia), using the state education agency's latest population data.

Bingham said defining a poor, rural district in a way that's consistent statewide became difficult. Knowing it costs more to educate students living in poverty, he and his co-sponsors opted to use the 80-percent-or-higher poverty rating.

"It hits mostly poor, rural districts," he said. "You have to treat the districts fairly."

Last week's House votes officially moved the budget process to the Senate, which is expected to debate its plan in late May.

Title: **Haley: Feds agree to remove some plutonium**
 Author: MEG KINNARD ASSOCIATED PRESS
 Size: 25.42 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Haley: Feds agree to remove some plutonium

MEG KINNARD
 ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA - Gov. Nikki Haley says the federal government has agreed to remove some of the plutonium being stored in South Carolina.

Haley's office tells The Associated Press that U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz told her during a call Tuesday night 6 metric tons of plutonium currently at the Savannah River Site will ultimately be stored at a facility in New Mexico that should be operational by the end of this year.

Haley has for years spoken out against the storage of plutonium at the South Carolina complex, writing to Moniz last month saying he must stop or reroute another shipment on its way from Japan. Calling the deal a win, she also pointed out her continuing lawsuit against the Department of Energy over an unfinished project to process weapons grade plutonium also stored at the site into commercial reactor fuel.

"We will continue to watch this process carefully, as the Department of Energy has not lived up to promises made in the past," Haley said in a statement provided to AP. "We will not back down from our lawsuit until the DOE pays the \$1 million a day fine they are required to under federal law."

Energy officials didn't immediately return a message seeking comment. Tons of plu-

tonium have accumulated over the years at the former nuclear weapons complex along the state's border with Georgia. Separate from the materials covered in Tuesday's conversation is about 7 tons of weapons grade plutonium, which is also at the site and ultimately intended to be processed into commercial nuclear reactor fuel, as part of a nonproliferation agreement with Russia.

The facility for that process is billions over budget and remains incomplete. South Carolina is already suing the federal government over what the governor has called its broken promise to the state to finish the mixed-oxide fuel facility, seeking fines of \$1 million a day because the plant wasn't operational by a Jan. 1 deadline.

The Obama administration has gradually scaled down funding for the project, proposing to mothball it in 2014, citing cost overruns and delays. That prompted an earlier lawsuit, with the state saying the federal government had made a commitment to South Carolina and couldn't use money intended to build the plant to shut it down.

The state ultimately dropped the suit when the administration committed to funding the project through that fiscal year. But the administration has since said it's searching for a less expensive way to dispose of the plutonium, like immobilizing it in glass or processing it in different kinds of reactors.



Title: **Haley: Feds agree to remove some plutonium**
 Author: BY MEG KINNARD Associated Press
 Size: 27.9 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688

SOUTH CAROLINA

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BY MEG KINNARD

Associated Press

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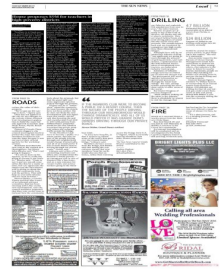
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Title: **House proposes \$9M for teachers in high-poverty districts**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
 Size: 39.21 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238

House proposes \$9M for teachers in high-poverty districts

BY SEANNA ADCOX
 Associated Press

COLUMBIA

Teachers in 42 high-poverty school districts in South Carolina could get a salary boost under a one-year experiment advanced by the House.

The proposal would distribute \$9.1 million to districts where at least 80 percent of students live in poverty, with amounts ranging from roughly \$37,500 to \$1.3 million based on student population. Rising student poverty means just over half of districts would benefit.

District officials must use their allotment for "teacher recruitment and retention" but how is up to them.

"It's wide open – whatever they need to do to keep teachers in their district," said Rep. Kenny Bingham, chairman of the House's K-12 budget panel.

Possibilities he cited include performance bonuses, hiring teachers in hard-to-fill subjects such as science and even paying teachers' moving costs.

The proposal is aimed at keeping good teachers in

poor districts that can't pay as much as their more prosperous neighbors. Legislators would then evaluate next year whether the money made a difference before making it a recurring expense, said Bingham, R-Cayce.

The chairman of the Senate's K-12 budget panel said Tuesday he supports the idea, which the House passed unanimously last week as an amendment to its 2016-17 spending plan.

"It probably stands a good chance of staying in the budget," said Sen. Wes Hayes, R-Rock Hill.

The House budget plan would give teachers statewide a 2 percent cost-of-living increase. The additional allotment could help answer the state Supreme Court's 2014 ruling that the state fails to provide educational opportunities in poor, rural districts that initially sued the state over funding in 1993. Legislators face a June deadline for developing a plan to fix South Carolina's broken education system.

Teacher quality was among the inequities justices' cited. Plaintiff districts pay the least. Filling va-

cancies often means hiring teachers who are inexperienced, uncertified and/or long-term substitutes who lack a college degree. Widespread teacher turnover compounds the problem, the justices wrote.

Even without the ruling, legislators must do something to help poor districts hire and keep good teachers, Hayes said.

"Lawsuit or not, it's a real crisis in a lot of these districts," he said.

Kathy Maness, director of the Palmetto State Teachers Association, said she appreciates the legislators' efforts.

"I hope this \$9 million helps reward those teachers who districts know can go to another county and make \$10,000 more but are willing to make the drive because the students need them," she said.

The House budget plan also includes \$8.2 million toward a loan-forgiveness program advocated earlier this year by Gov. Nikki Haley. Students could get up to \$30,000 worth of tuition loans erased if they commit to teaching eight years in a district with excessive teacher turnover. The 20 districts

that currently meet the definition lost between 11 percent and 34 percent of their teachers last year.

Bingham said legislators recognized that program wasn't enough.

"That's great for new teachers going to a district, but what do we do for teachers already there? How are you going to retain them?" he said.

Under the House plan, districts' share of the \$9 million breaks down to \$53 per student.

The largest chunk would go to Richland 1, the district for downtown Columbia – which is clearly not rural – followed by Sumter County, Darlington County, Cherokee County, and Lexington 2 (West Columbia), using the state education agency's latest population data.

Bingham said defining a poor, rural district in a way that's consistent statewide became difficult. Knowing it costs more to educate students living in poverty, he and his co-sponsors opted to use the 80-percent-or-higher poverty rating.

"It hits mostly poor, rural districts," he said. "You have to treat the districts fairly."

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Title: **House proposes \$9M for teachers in poor districts**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
 Size: 46.19 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



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TEACHERS

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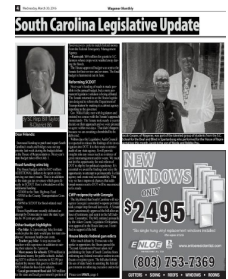
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Title: **South Carolina Legislative Update**
 Author: By SC Rep. Bill Taylor, R-District 86
 Size: 113.46 square inch
 Aiken, SC Circulation: 19635



South Carolina Legislative Update

By SC Rep. Bill Taylor,
R-District 86

Dear Friends:

Increased funding to patch and repair South Carolina's roads and bridges was our top priority last week during the budget debate in the House of Representatives. Next year's state budget takes effect July 1.

Road funding wins big

The House budget calls for \$415 million ADDITIONAL dollars to be spent on improving our state's roads. This is in addition to the state gas tax revenues which goes directly to SCDOT. Here's a breakdown of the additional funding:

- \$316M to the State Highway Fund
- \$50M to the County Transportation Committees
- \$49M to SCDOT for flood-related road repairs

House Republicans soundly defeated an attempt by Democrats to raise the state's gas tax by 10 cents per gallon.

Other budget highlights

- **Pay hike:** A 2 percent pay hike for state workers plus the state would pay for state employees' increased health-care costs.
- **Teacher pay hike:** A step increase for teachers with experience in addition to raising their salaries by 2 percent.
- **More money for schools:** \$350 million in additional money for public schools, includ-

ing \$217.6 million to increase to \$2,350 per student the money that goes to schools and \$19.2 million for bus driver salaries.

- **Local government flood aid:** \$60 million for the state and local government's portion of

flood-recovery costs to match federal money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

- **Farm aid:** \$40 million for grants to S.C. farmers whose crops were washed away during the floods.

The House-approved budget was sent to the Senate for their review and revision. The final budget is hammered out in June.

Reforming SCDOT

Next year's funding of roads is made possible in the annual budget, but a more permanent legislative solution is being debated. The Senate returned to us the House legislation designed to reform the Department of Transportation by making it a cabinet agency reporting to the governor.

Gov. Nikki Haley met with legislators and insisted we concur with the Senate's approach immediately. The Senate took nearly a year to decide on their approach and we were pressed to agree within two days. That didn't happen because we are awaiting a bombshell to be delivered.

Within days the Legislative Audit Council is expected to release the findings of its investigation into DOT. It is their most extensive

audit of any state agency. It will provide insights into any issues such as evidence of gross mismanagement and/or waste. We must not let this opportunity for real reform of DOT to slip by for political expediency. It's essential we await the findings and seize the opportunity to attempt to permanently fix this agency and create real accountability. That way we have improved chances that additional monies sent to DOT will be maximized to fix roads.

CWP reciprocity with Georgia

The likelihood that South Carolina will recognize Georgia's concealed weapons permits took a major step forward last week. A Senate panel unanimously approved the bill after an hour of testimony and sent it to the full Judiciary Committee. The bill, initiated primarily by the Aiken County Legislative Delegation, won approval in the House last year. I testified in support of the bill.

House blocks federal gun edicts

After much debate by Democrats who spoke in opposition, the House passed the "Second Amendment Preservation Act" prohibiting the State of South Carolina from enforcing any federal executive orders to confiscate or register guns. The bill also forbids the use of state funds in assisting the federal government in enforcing executive orders for

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UPDATE

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firearms. The vote prompted news stories around the nation.

Senate approves refugees bill

The Senate approved a state registry of refugees, just one day after terrorists bombed a Brussels airport and subway station, killing more than 30 people and injuring another 250. The Senate voted 39-6 to start the registry, which could be the first of its kind in the nation. The proposal still needs approval from the House. Registry backers said they are concerned terrorists could enter the state

under the guise of being refugees. Several dozen refugees entered South Carolina last year, and an estimated 200 will arrive in the state this year. New York is the only other state considering a refugee registry.

No dumping ground

Gov. Nikki Haley told the federal government this week to either stop Japanese shipments of plutonium from going to the Savannah River Site or reroute the plutonium so that it doesn't enter South Carolina. She says she doesn't want S.C. to become

a "permanent nuclear dumping ground." Reportedly, ships carrying 331 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium from Japan will soon dock at the Charleston Naval Weapons Station before the plutonium is sent to the Savannah River Site here in Aiken County.

Alimony reform

On April 13th, the House is scheduled to begin debate on the Alimony Reform Bill (H.4029). I have received a lot of correspon-

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dence from those who believe this reform is badly needed in order for the financial responsibilities for both ex-spouses to be fair and equal after a divorce. While divorce is traumatic by itself, the strain and strife that is added by the current alimony laws often create a dependency on one ex-spouse and a condition of involuntary servitude on the other ex-spouse. If you have opinions on this bill, please share your thoughts with me before I am asked to vote. Email me at **Bill@TaylorSCHouse.com**.

Learning about American Values



Most Representatives think it's a good idea that high school students are taught the founding principles that shaped the United States. The House passed the South Carolina Founding Principles Act (H.3848) requiring the study of the U.S. Constitution, the Federalist Papers, the structure of government and the role of the separation of powers and the freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights to the Constitution.

Election time

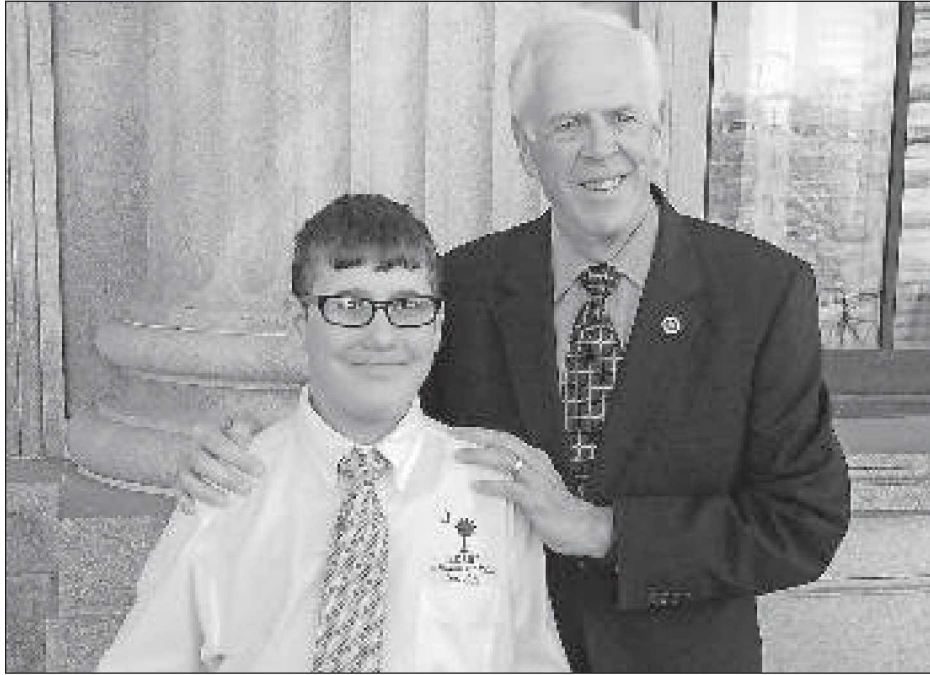
March 16th was the first day for filing to run in the June Republican Primary Elec-

tion. My paperwork was submitted at the Aiken County Election Commission that day. I'm honored and humbled to serve the constituents of House District 86 and ask for your continued prayers and support.

I'm available

If you need assistance navigating state government, or have any thoughts or concerns about what we are doing, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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Jacob Cooper, of Wagener, was part of the talented group of students from the S.C. School for the Deaf and Blind in Spartanburg who performed for the House of Representatives this month. Jacob is the son of Nicole and Robbie Pou.



Tialeisha Corley, representing Wagener-Salley High School, was one of six Aiken County student shadows who spent a day at the S.C. Legislature this month. This is an annual event. The "shadows" were greeted by Speaker Jay Lucas after they spent most of the morning occupying our desks on the House floor. They also joined us for the legislative lunch on the Statehouse grounds hosted by the S.C. Baptist Conference. Shown are students Brandon Criswell, from left, Midland Valley High School; Abby Williams, Aiken County Career Center; Connor Whitley, South Aiken High; Tialeisha Corley, Wagener-Salley High; Zulema Garcia, Midland Valley High; and Marcaysia Kitchings, Silver Bluff High.

Title: **Vietnam veterans honored by DAR**
 Author: BY LARRY WOOD lwood@aikenstandard.com
 Size: 64.48 square inch
 Aiken, SC Circulation: 19635



Vietnam veterans honored by DAR

BY LARRY WOOD

lwood@aikenstandard.com

The Trenton Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution on Tuesday honored servicemen and women who served in the Vietnam War, placing a wreath at the Vietnam Monument in Aiken to recognize the day the last U.S. combat troops withdrew from South Vietnam.

The date, March 29, 1973, marked the final day U.S. troops were on the

ground in South Vietnam and the end of America's direct involvement in the Vietnam War.

The VFW Denizens of the Deep, Aiken Chapter, and the William Stroud Society of the Children of the American Revolution also placed patriotic red, white and blue wreaths in front of the Vietnam Monument in the south parkway at the intersec-

tion of Laurens Street and Edgefield Avenue. The ceremony's theme was "We Remember!"

"We are here today to honor our

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INSIDE

Trenton DAR chapter wins state award, **5A**

DAR

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nation's men and women who served at all of our military command posts during this era of 1955 through 1975 and to thank the families and friends who stood by them during this time," Jeanne Quattlebaum, vice regent of the Trenton Chapter DAR, said to about 50 veterans, their families and supporters who gathered for the ceremony.

Quattlebaum said the ceremony was especially meaningful to her as a veteran who served in the U.S. Women's Army Corps at Fort Rucker, Alabama, from 1961 to 1963.

"This day has been so special to me as a veteran myself to finally recognize our Vietnam War veterans who did not have a good parade or recognition when they arrived from 1973 to 1975 coming home from the war," she said.

Aiken Mayor Rick Osbon read a proclamation designating March 29, 2016, as a day to recognize the end of America's direct involvement in Vietnam.

"This city has an obligation to honor veterans of the armed forces and to assist them in re-adjusting to civilian life," Osbon said. "We should all honor our dead by serving the living and reflect our recognition of this obligation in an appropriate and concrete fashion."

Osbon said it is important to thank all of the 2.5 million men and women who served in Vietnam and the 50,000 more who served in the Southeast Asian theater for their dedication to their country.

"Now, they fight on welfare and unemployment lines, in government hospitals and psychiatric wards," he said. "Some fight for jobs, decent housing,

education and training, and others just to be good citizens."

Osbon also read a letter from S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley, honoring Vietnam veterans and their families.

"Throughout our country's history, we have been blessed by courageous men and women who risked their lives to protect our country and secure peace and democracy in troubled nations," Osbon read from the letter. "We are humbled by their choice of a life of honor and duty, and we take great pride in their efforts to help improve the quality of life for people in foreign lands."

In her letter, Haley wrote nearly 900 South Carolinian servicemen and women lost their lives in the Vietnam War and 58,000 suffered injuries.

"This war is a reminder to all of us that the cost of freedom

is high," Haley wrote.

On March 29, 1974, the late Mayor H. Odell Weeks dedicated the then new Vietnam War Monument, honoring the 30 Aiken County veterans who lost their lives in the war and declaring the day Vietnam Veterans Day in Aiken.

The Trenton Chapter DAR is a partner in the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War with the National DAR and the Department of Defense.

A National Defense Authorization Act authorized the Secretary of Defense to conduct the commemoration of the war, which ended with the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. The commemorations will continue through 2017.

A native of Aiken, **Larry Wood** covers education for the *Aiken Standard*.

Title: **Vietnam veterans honored by DAR**

Author: BY LARRY WOOD lwood@aikenstandard.com

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Aiken, SC Circulation: 19635



STAFF PHOTO BY LARRY WOOD

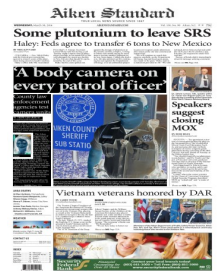
Members of the Aiken Department of Public Safety Honor Guard Lt. Brian Key, left, and Sgt. Matt Comer participate in a remembrance ceremony honoring those who served in the Vietnam War.



STAFF PHOTO BY LARRY WOOD

Bagpipers George Grinton, left, who works for the City of Aiken, and Bobby Wilson, who works for Aiken County, play "Amazing Grace" during a ceremony Tuesday honoring Vietnam veterans at the Aiken County Vietnam War Monument in the south parkway at the intersection of Laurens Street and Edgefield Avenue. The Trenton Chapter DAR planned the ceremony to commemorate the date, March 29, 1973, the day the last combat troops withdrew from South Vietnam, ending direct American involvement in the Vietnam War.

Title: 'A body camera on every patrol officer'
 Author: BY TRIPP GIRARDEAU tgirardeau@aikenstandard.com
 Size: 128.03 square inch
 Aiken, SC Circulation: 19635



'A body camera on every patrol officer'

County law enforcement agencies test camera units

BY TRIPP GIRARDEAU
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Three law enforcement agencies around Aiken County have received approval for their individual body camera policies and guidelines, and two have some important decisions to make.

The Aiken



Haley

Aiken Public Safety's plan was

Department of Public Safety and the Aiken County Sheriff's Office are currently in the process of deciding what equipment will work best for each agency when it comes to body camera systems.

recently approved by the S.C. Law Enforcement Training Council; the Sheriff's Office and North Augusta Public Safety both had their plans approved by March 7.

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley signed a requirement into law in 2015 that all state law enforcement agencies had to implement body cams.

This requirement came after the shooting death of Walter Scott, an

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unarmed motorist, who was fatally shot by former North Charleston police officer Michael Slager in April 2015.

Testing body cams

"We have four test units we have currently deployed on some uniformed deputies," said Capt. Eric Abdullah with the Aiken County Sheriff's Office.

Abdullah said the Sheriff's Office is testing many different kinds of body camera systems before deciding on one.

The Aiken Department of Public Safety also is testing different body camera units, said Capt. David Turno with Public Safety.

"We currently have about half a dozen test cameras, but it's going to take some

time before we decide on anything definite," Turno said. "The technology for body cameras is always changing so quickly. You don't want to buy these expensive cameras and then find out the technology is already dated by the time you get them."

Both Abdullah and Turno also said a big decision for each agency is the storage

system that must be installed in order to save and document the hours of footage the body cameras will record.

Aiken Public Safety is looking into the body camera systems made by the same company that makes their patrol car cameras,

Turno said.

"It may be easier to incorporate a body camera system

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made by a company we are already familiar with," Turno said. "But no definite decisions have been made yet with anything."

Funding body cams

The Sheriff's Office still must wait to receive funding before it can make any kind of final decision. He said the Sheriff's Office is asking the Aiken County Government to fund its body cameras, Abdullah said.

"We are asking the taxpayers to fund us," Abdullah said. "We don't want to pick the most expensive body camera. We want to pick the body camera that works best for us. It's all a process."

He said body cameras can range from \$200 to \$1,000 per unit.

However, he said, they are "looking into many avenues" for funding.

"Once we have funding, then we can make our final decision," Abdullah said. "We want to deploy 130 to 150 body camera units, in addition to other tech."

Public Safety currently has \$26,000 for funding body camera systems; the funding comes from the City of Aiken, Turno said.

The state will reimburse the city for all the money given to fund Public Safety's cameras; the state will also reimburse Aiken County if it funds the Sheriff's Office,

Turno said.

The North Augusta Department of Public Safety already had body cameras implemented into its agency before the mandatory requirement that all S.C. law enforcement agencies implement body cameras was put in place.

"We bought 50 body-worn cameras," said Lt. Tim Thornton with the North Augusta Department of Public Safety. "So, after we received approval, we submitted reimbursements for our cameras. Now we are just waiting on the check."

'Worth it'

"Our goal is to eventu-

ally have a body camera on every patrol officer in our agency," Turno said. "However, this will take a few years before we get every officer a unit."

Once local law enforcement agencies have deployed body cameras, they will be additional tools for the agency to collect good evidence, Abdullah said.

"Anything we do in law enforcement is a learning tool," Abdullah said. "It's all about the lessons learned. Anything we can use to help us better ourselves is worth it."

Tripp Girardeau is the crime and courts reporter with the *Aiken Standard*.

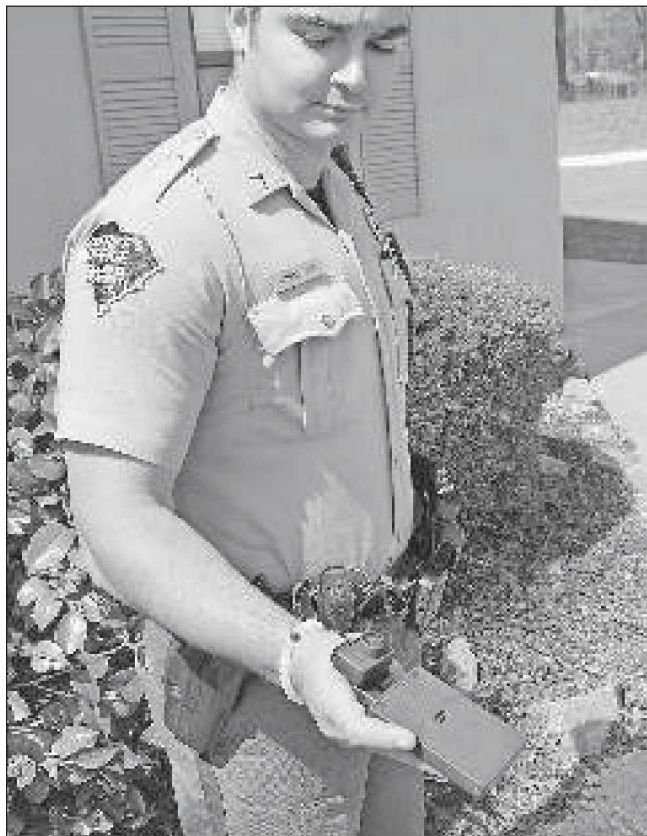
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Aiken County Sheriff's Office Deputy Robert Rodriguez wears a test body camera unit Tuesday afternoon at the Aiken County Sheriff Sub Station at Aiken Technical College. The Sheriff's Office is currently in the process of determining what kind of body camera system works best for them.

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Deputy Robert Rodriguez holds his test body camera unit at the Sheriff's Office Sub Station at Aiken Technical College.