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Subject: Afternoon Clips – Friday, December 16, 2016

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Nikki Haley: UN Ambassador News:

Washington Post: Women and minorities could be missing from the Cabinet's 'big four' jobs for the first time since 1993

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2016/12/16/women-and-minorities-could-be-missing-from-the-cabinets-big-four-jobs-for-the-first-time-since-1993/?utm_term=.ed309b771fa0

Jena McGregor

Now that Donald Trump has named ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson as his pick for secretary of state, the transition has reached a milestone of sorts. Nominations for the most prized jobs in the Cabinet -- the people who lead the Departments of State, Defense, Justice and the Treasury -- are all in place, filling what have come to be known as the "big four" jobs. As The Post wrote in 2011, these are the "original departments created by George Washington, with the heftiest portfolios" -- the most high-profile positions and among the foremost voices guiding the president's thinking on critical military, foreign affairs, justice and economic issues. And for the first time in more than two decades -- if those four names are ultimately confirmed -- the "big four" jobs will be entirely white and male.

NOTE: South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, the daughter of immigrants from India, was selected as the ambassador to the United Nations, while the co-founder of the professional wrestling franchise WWE, Linda McMahon, is Trump's pick to lead the Small Business Administration. His campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, the first woman to manage a winning presidential campaign, has said she could work as an outside adviser or potentially, as she said in a "Morning Joe" television appearance Thursday, on the inside.

SC Political News:

McClatchy DC: SC's Rep. Mick Mulvaney to be named Trump's budget director

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/white-house/article121384043.html>

Anita Kumar

President-elect Donald Trump will nominate Rep. Mick Mulvaney, R-S.C., to be director of the Office of Management and Budget, according to a senior transition official with knowledge of the appointment but not authorized to speak publicly. The announcement is expected to be made on Monday. Mulvaney would need to be confirmed by the Senate. Mulvaney had expressed an interest in running OMB, when asked by a constituent on Facebook Oct. 19 where he would like to serve in a hypothetical Trump Cabinet. "I would love to be the director of OMB," he wrote. "That is where I think REAL improvements could be made in how the government is run." A fiscal conservative, Mulvaney is a member of the House Financial Services Committee and is a co-founder of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, a group of about 40 lawmakers that helped push then-House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, to resign.

Post and Courier: Mulvaney to be named next director of Office of Management and Budget

http://www.postandcourier.com/news/mulvaney-to-be-named-next-director-of-office-of-management/article_037b3c36-c3db-11e6-b86d-9b5ea285a4f3.html

Emma Dumain

A second South Carolina Republican has been selected to join President-elect Donald Trump's administration. U.S. Rep. Mick Mulvaney is expected to be nominated on Monday to serve as director

of the Office of Management and Budget. The timing of the announcement was first reported by the McClatchy News Service. It was confirmed by The Post and Courier from a source in New York who is familiar with the transition team, which is based in Manhattan's Trump Tower. Last month, Gov. Nikki Haley was selected to serve as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Both Haley and Mulvaney will have to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

General Assembly News:

The State: Bathroom bills, gun background checks, term limits among SC House proposals

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article121321278.html>

Avery G. Wilks

S.C. House members have prefiled more than 360 bills that they would like to see become law. (State senators had their chance earlier in the week.) A look at some of the House proposals:

NOTE: The transgender bathroom bill is back! It's back. Freshman state Rep. Steven Long, R-Spartanburg, proposes banning local governments from requiring that private clubs or buildings allow guests to use the bathroom of their choice. The proposal also would give local governments the go-ahead to require that transgender men and women use only the public bathrooms of their birth sex. The bill is similar to the controversial proposal by former state Sen. Lee Bright, R-Spartanburg, that failed last session.

The State: Would you vote to quadruple SC lawmakers salaries? <http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article121277593.html>

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article121277593.html>

Avery G. Wilks

A S.C. House member wants to quadruple state legislators' pay in an effort, he says, to open up politics to ordinary citizens. State Rep. John King, D-York, has prefiled legislation that would let voters decide whether to increase S.C. legislators' annual salaries to \$42,830 from \$10,400. "You have to understand if we don't increase the amount of money that legislators are paid, we won't get the best and brightest minds in South Carolina because those people have to take care of their families," said King, a funeral home director who has been in the House since 2009. "People won't give up their jobs for \$10,400 a year." "The whole premise behind this is to open it up for all South Carolinians to feel like you can run and be elected."

Independent Mail: Clements looks back and ahead

<http://www.independentmail.com/story/news/2016/12/16/clements-looks-back-and-ahead/95519392/>

Mike Eads

Change has been a constant around Clemson University for a few decades, but the pace has been noticeably quicker under President Jim Clements, just as he expected when he arrived from the University of West Virginia three years ago. "I was excited about where Clemson was ... but it was also my chance to take the ball and run with it," Clements said. "We've got a lot of good people working on lots of stuff. It's been a great run."

Dylann Roof Case:

Associated Press: Jury assures Dylann Roof will never walk free again

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

Jeffrey Collins and Meg Kinnard

The Confederate flag is gone from South Carolina's Statehouse. The bullet holes have been patched in Emanuel AME's fellowship hall. And now Dylann Roof will almost certainly spend the rest of his days in prison for killing nine black worshippers at the Charleston church. A federal jury convicted Roof on all 33 counts Thursday. Those same jurors will decide in another phase of the trial starting Jan. 3 whether he faces the death penalty or life in prison. When testimony starts, Roof will be his own attorney, having again fired defense lawyers who fear Roof is taking over because he doesn't want them to present embarrassing evidence in their efforts to spare his life.

CNN: Dylann Roof trial: Will he get the death penalty?

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/12/15/us/dylann-roof-murder-trial/index.html>

Nick Valencia and Catherine Shoichet

Esther Lance was torn over how to punish Dylann Roof, the man found guilty of killing her mother and eight others at a Bible study in Charleston, South Carolina, last year. "Yes, I want him to see the death penalty," Lance told CNN's Nick Valencia after a jury on Thursday convicted Roof on all 33 federal charges against him.

But Lance, 53, quickly changed her mind, saying she and her late 70-year-old mother, once a custodian at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, wouldn't want Roof to get that punishment. "My mom wouldn't have wanted that," she said of Ethel Lance, a city employee for more than three decades, who had worked back stage at Gaillard Auditorium. Next month, the jury will wrestle with whether to sentence Roof to the death penalty. That phase of his trial is expected to start on Tuesday, January 3. Roof has said he wants to represent himself in that part of the case.

CNN: Charleston victim's brother: Dylann Roof should get death penalty

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/12/16/us/charleston-victim-brother-cnnv/>

Alexandra King

The brother of one of the Charleston shooting victims called for Dylann Roof to receive the death penalty Friday, insisting that Roof should "to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law." Roof found guilty on all charges. Malcolm Graham, whose sister, Cynthia Hurd, was one of the nine people fatally shot by Roof during a Bible study class at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in June 2015, told CNN's Carol Costello that for him, the appropriate sentence in this case is crystal clear. "If there's any case in America where the death penalty is deserved, it is this one," Graham said. "The crime was premeditated. It was calculated." But most importantly, Graham said, Roof's crime "was an attack on a race of people." "Those who died that night simply died because they were there, and that they were black. That type of hate, that type of discrimination, that type of just evil, has no place in a civilized society, and has no place in America's jails," he emphasized.

Post and Courier: Son of Emanuel victim gives back in memory of his mother

http://www.postandcourier.com/news/son-of-emanuel-victim-gives-back-in-memory-of-his/article_6e48edb8-c3a6-11e6-932f-9353f6770208.html

Prentiss Findlay

Kevin Singleton played Santa on Friday to some kids at James Simons Elementary School as he talked about losing his mother, Myra Thompson, in the Emanuel AME Church shooting. "This brings some happiness. It's good therapy," he said, as he gave away bikes, remote-control trucks and Barbie dolls. "I think it's good for them. A bicycle goes a long way," he said. Singleton, 43, of Charlotte, was a student at the school where his mother taught. In her memory, he established Passion to Forgive, a small nonprofit to provide holiday gifts for needy kids. This was the second year of the effort. "I think she would be very happy and proud," he said of his mother. On Thursday, a jury convicted Dylann Roof of 33 federal crimes stemming from the violent deaths of Thompson and eight other black parishioners at the church. "We're numb. It's not a true victory," Singleton said. "We just want to close that chapter and move on."

North Carolina News:

Associated Press: N. Carolina GOP strips some of Democratic governor's power

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/78b7ee8bda724166a8f3f79736f4c448/north-carolina-gop-seeks-reduce-next-governors-powers>

North Carolina Republicans stripped the incoming Democratic governor of some of his authority on Friday and they were on the cusp of an even greater power grab, an extraordinary move that critics said flies in the face of voters. Just last week, it appeared Republicans were ready to finally accept Democrats' narrow win in a contentious governor's race. As it turns out, they weren't done fighting. In

a surprise special session in the dying days of the old administration, some say the Republican-dominated legislature has thrown the government into total disarray, approving at least one bill aimed at emasculating incoming Gov. Roy Cooper's administration. Cooper, the current attorney general, has threatened to sue. And many in the state are accusing Republicans of letting sour grapes over losing the governor's mansion turn into a legislative coup.

Associated Press: N. Carolina governor sticks with GOP, diminishing successor

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/ee2a0033b40045debf353b6d44573f4c/n-carolina-governor-sticks-gop-diminishing-successor>

The last significant act of outgoing Republican Gov. Pat McCrory's tempestuous administration has been to go along with GOP legislators and sign into law at least one quickly put together bill that will diminish the power of his Democratic successor. McCrory must still decide whether to sign a second bill passed by a Republican-dominated General Assembly that has repeatedly tugged the man who campaigned in 2012 as Charlotte's moderate former mayor into hard-right turf. Lawmakers' veto-proof majorities since 2013 and the uncompetitive election districts they drew have allowed legislative Republicans to ignore Democratic viewpoints and sometimes McCrory's desires. McCrory's years have been marked by political battles between the governor, entrenched legislators, and Democrats fighting for their priorities in a state where political opinions remain evenly divided.

Associated Press: Driver charged after school bus carrying 19 overturns

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0f6951f65b2e4c7e85512ed7f0186d1f/school-bus-carrying-19-swerves-avoid-deer-overturns>

Authorities in North Carolina say the driver of a school bus that overturned with 19 children on board will face charges. State Highway Patrol spokesman Sgt. Mike Baker said 40-year-old Julianne Bridgers of Pinetops is charged with careless and reckless driving. The patrol says Bridgers told officers she swerved Friday to avoid a deer that ran in front of the bus. Edgecombe County public schools spokeswoman Susan Hoke says the bus was carrying 19 children when it overturned. She said she didn't know how many required treatment for their injuries or how badly they were hurt. Hoke says the bus was on its way to G.W. Carver Elementary School in Pinetops when it rolled over. WITN reports (<http://bit.ly/2gIPmKn>) Edgecombe County Sheriff James Knight as saying 15 students were injured.

South Carolina News:

Associated Press: Freezing drizzle possible in northern South Carolina

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=rD8WQG2L

SC State Wire

The National Weather Service says light freezing rain is possible in parts of northern South Carolina. Forecasters issued a freezing rain advisory starting 7 p.m. Friday for seven counties along the state line from Oconee County east to Lancaster County. The advisory includes places like Anderson, Greenville, Spartanburg and Rock Hill. The weather service says it doesn't expect much accumulation from the light freezing drizzle. But any ice on road, bridges or sidewalks can be dangerous. Forecasters expect temperatures to rise above freezing by Saturday morning, ending the icy threat.

Post and Courier: S.C. holiday travelers to reach record numbers

http://www.postandcourier.com/business/s-c-holiday-travelers-to-reach-record-numbers/article_b174b778-c3a3-11e6-9667-aba0a8dd594d.html

Warren L. Wise

Holiday travelers will pack South Carolina's roads between Christmas and New Year's in record numbers. More than 1.4 million Palmetto State residents will travel 50 miles or more during the holidays, according to Charlotte-based motor club AAA Carolinas. The 1 percent jump in motorists covers the 12 days from Dec. 23 to Jan. 3 as travelers shrug off rising gasoline prices. The average gas price across South Carolina stood at about \$2.03 a gallon Friday, according to AAA and gas

price service GasBuddy. That's about 25 cents more per gallon than this time last year. Gas prices are on the rise after oil-exporting countries decided last month to cut production starting in January to boost sagging world prices.

Associated Press: Hiring rises at robust pace in 9 US states last month

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=lr6lDITa

SC State Wire

Employers stepped up their hiring in nine U.S. states last month and cut jobs in two amid modest improvement in the nation's labor market. The Labor Department said Friday that unemployment rates fell sharply in 18 states and were little changed in 32 states. Florida reported the largest job gain in November, adding 29,600 jobs, followed by Indiana, which gained 13,100 jobs, and South Carolina, with 12,500. The largest drops in unemployment rates last month occurred in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Missouri, each of which saw a decline of 0.4 percent. Nationwide, the unemployment rate fell to a nine-year low of 4.6 percent last month, as employers added 178,000 jobs. But much of the drop occurred because more Americans stopped looking for work and were no longer counted as unemployed.

Associated Press: South Carolina jobless rate falls for 7th consecutive month

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=vGqGW1CU

South Carolina's jobless rate has fallen for the seventh consecutive month, reaching a nearly 16-year low. The Department of Employment and Workforce said Friday that South Carolina's unemployment rate was 4.4 percent in November, down from 4.7 percent in October. The rate hasn't been that low since early 2001. The agency says the number of South Carolinians working rose to a new high of 2.2 million. The number of unemployed people looking for work declined to about 102,000. The U.S. Labor Department again ranks South Carolina as having the 22nd lowest jobless rate in the country. The national jobless rate in November dropped to 4.6 percent. New Hampshire and South Dakota again posted the lowest rate of 2.7 percent, while Alaska again had the highest at 6.8 percent.

The State: SC employment sets record at 2.2 million-plus people working

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article121282013.html>

Roddie Burris

The number of South Carolinians working in November exceeded 2.2 million people for the first time in state history, as the month's unemployment rate fell to 4.4 percent. The October jobless rate was 4.7 percent, the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce announced Friday. Nationally, the November jobless rate decreased to 4.6 percent from 4.9 percent in October. The September numbers also placed the Palmetto State below the U.S. joblessness rate. November's South Carolina unemployment rate is the lowest in nearly 16 years, the state agency said in a statement. November's decrease marks the seventh consecutive month the unemployment rate has dropped. "In the last month alone, nearly 8,000 people found work, bringing South Carolina's labor statistics to levels not seen since 2001," said Cheryl Stanton, director of the state agency. "But it is not time to rest – we must continue to develop our workforce for the 59,000 jobs that are currently available across the state, and those other jobs coming soon."

Post and Courier: S.C.'s unemployment rate falls to 4.4 percent in November

http://www.postandcourier.com/business/s-c-s-unemployment-rate-falls-to-percent-in-november/article_def567ea-c39b-11e6-a7d9-7b610bb69bb6.html

Thad Moore

South Carolina's unemployment rate continued to drop in November as the state saw job gains across several sectors. The jobless rate fell to 4.4 percent adjusted for seasonal changes, reaching its lowest point since January 2001, the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce said Friday. The national unemployment rate in November fell to 4.6 percent. The labor department adjusts figures to account for seasonal variations like the holiday shopping season. The improvement came as the state's payrolls swelled by 12,500, essentially balancing out a drop in October, when results were

likely skewed by Hurricane Matthew. Early that month, the storm forced the evacuation of the coastline, home to some of the state's fastest-growing areas. Surveys went out just days later.

Associated Press: Drug overdose deaths rise significantly in past 5 years

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=PK51DBfl

SC State Wire

Drug overdose deaths have increased by 33 percent in the past five years across the country, with some states seeing jumps of nearly 200 percent. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 30 states saw increases in overdose deaths resulting from the abuse of heroin and prescription painkillers, a class of drugs known as opioids. New Hampshire saw a 191 percent increase while North Dakota, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maine had death rates jump by over 100 percent. "Too many Americans are feeling the devastation of the opioid crisis either from misuse of prescription opioids or use of illicit opioids," said Dr. Tom Frieden, head of the CDC. "Urgent action is needed to help health care providers treat pain safely and treat opioid use disorder effectively, support law enforcement strategies to reduce the availability of illicit opiates, and support states to develop and implement programs that can save lives."

NOTE: The CDC report also included death certificate data for opioid overdoses in 28 states, finding that 16 saw a jump in death rates from synthetic opioids including illicit fentanyl. New York (135.7 percent), Connecticut (125.9 percent) and Illinois (120 percent) were the hardest hit. As for heroin deaths, 11 states had increases, with South Carolina (57.1 percent), North Carolina (46.4 percent) and Tennessee (43.5 percent) seeing the biggest spike.

Island Packet: Marine Corps recruiter convicted on sex charges says ex-commandant's talk went too far

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/community/beaufort-news/bg-military/article121348958.html>

The former Marine Corps commandant's tough talk against sexual assault is still disrupting military justice, and now is helping call into question the case against a former Georgia-based Marine recruiter convicted of misconduct with four female high school students. In the latest indirect fallout from the 2012 prosecutorial utterances of now-retired Marine Corps Gen. James Amos, the nation's highest military appellate court this week agreed to hear a challenge from former Staff Sgt. Nhubu C. Chikaka. A court-martial panel at Parris Island, S.C., convicted Chikaka on multiple charges in 2014 and sentenced him to 12 years, later reduced to 10. The charges, ranging from abusive sexual contact to indecent language, revolved around Chikaka's alleged actions while a recruiter in Douglasville, about 100 miles north of Columbus, Ga. The appeal centers on the potential taint of unlawful command influence personified by Amos' words at a time when lawmakers were decrying an alleged "epidemic of military sexual assault."

Local News:

Associated Press: Man gets life for killing girlfriend who saw 1st murder

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=OMaDd4io

SC State Wire

A 29-year-old man has been sentenced to life in prison after admitting he killed a man, then just over a week later killed his girlfriend who knew about the first slaying. Beaufort County prosecutors said in a news release Charles Brown pleaded guilty Friday to two counts of murder. Authorities say Brown killed 28-year-old Titus Singleton in December 2015, burning his decapitated body in a car in Yemassee. Prosecutors say 10 days later Brown shot his 25-year-old girlfriend Katherine Collier in the shoulder. Authorities say when Collier begged to be taken to the hospital, Brown shot her in the head, fearing she would tell authorities about Singleton's death. Authorities say Brown's brother Olin was sentenced to 13 years and mother Nancy Kennedy to three years for helping hide the bodies.

Associated Press: Cops: Drive-by shooting story fake; man charged with murder

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=a11Pzf5K

Authorities say a man who called 911 to report a fatal drive by shooting has been charged with murder after an autopsy on the victim didn't match the suspect's story. Laurens County Sheriff's Lt. Ben Blackmon told The Index-Journal of Greenwood (<http://bit.ly/2gTqfYt>) the deputies were suspicious of 24-year-old Samuel Davis' story starting shortly after he called police on Wednesday. Blackmon says investigators quickly determined Davis stole guns from a nearby home and arrested him. Blackmon says the autopsy results on 32-year-old Sammy Tribble III came back and didn't match Davis' story that he saw Tribble killed in a drive-by shooting in front of a home in Clinton. Davis is awaiting a bond hearing. It wasn't known if he had a lawyer.

Associated Press: Suspect attacks deputy near courthouse holding cell

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=EysR570w

SC State Wire

Authorities say a man who kicked two deputies who arrested him two months ago has now attacked an Orangeburg County officer trying to get him into a holding cell at the courthouse. A police report obtained by The Times and Democrat of Orangeburg (<http://bit.ly/2hswrHF>) says 35-year-old Wesley Givens slammed the officer's head into a cinderblock wall several times Wednesday as the deputy led him to the cell. Authorities say the officer was able to shoot Givens with a stun gun to end the attack. Two months ago, deputies say Givens kicked two officers as they led him to jail after his arrest on 14 warrants.

Post and Courier: Wando High School beefs up security after threats of violence on social media

http://www.postandcourier.com/news/wando-high-school-beefs-up-security-after-threats-of-violence/article_bfb96176-c394-11e6-accd-a720c3414034.html

Andrew Knapp

Wando High School beefed up security Friday after talk of violence there circulated on social media. The Charleston County School District got wind of the threats a day earlier, starting an inquiry into their origin and prompting parents to be alerted, spokesman Andy Pruitt said. Pruitt could not immediately provide specifics about the threats, though they are not considered credible. He could not say on which social media platform they appeared. "As of right now, they're just rumors," he said. "But because it's a rumor of violence, we have to take it seriously." The added security force is made up of district personnel and officers from the Mount Pleasant Police Department. Students' movements throughout the school was limited Friday to walking from class to class. Teachers and staff members were asked to be "extra vigilant."

Associated Press: Ex-Berkeley superintendent gets probation for corruption

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

SC State Wire

A former Berkeley County School District superintendent has pleaded guilty to a public corruption charge related to a 2012 school bond referendum. The Post and Courier of Charleston reports (<http://bit.ly/2h9q5da>) 49-year-old Rodney Thompson was ordered to serve a year of probation and pay a \$2,500 fine. If he violates his probation, he could have to serve the maximum sentence of a year in prison under his suspended sentence on the public corruption charge. Circuit Judge Jeffrey Young told Thompson it appears he failed to keep former district communications director Amy Kovach under control. Kovach had a five-year prison sentence suspended to two years of probation after pleading guilty to ethics charges. Kovach admitted she pushed for the nearly \$200 million bond referendum while on the clock for the school district.

Post and Courier: Former Berkeley schools chief admits guilt in Yes 4 Schools campaign

http://www.postandcourier.com/news/former-berkeley-schools-chief-admits-guilt-in-yes-schools-campaign/article_149cd636-c300-11e6-bc9f-17df24e341f8.html

Brenda Rindge

The Berkeley County School District's former superintendent failed to control "a vicious dog" and wound up breaking the law himself, a judge said Friday. "You have admitted your guilt and you have

shown remorse," Circuit Judge Jeffrey Young said while sentencing Rodney Thompson, 49. "From everything I see, you are a good man. You just didn't do what you were supposed to do on this one occasion." Agreeing there was a substantial likelihood he'd be found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, Thompson pleaded guilty Friday to a misdemeanor charge of using public funds, property or time to influence an election in connection with the district's 2012 Yes 4 Schools campaign.

WIS: Audit finds Midlands school district over spent by more than \$6 million

<http://www.wistv.com/story/34074663/audit-finds-midlands-school-district-over-spent-by-more-than-6-million>

Jeremy Turnage

Officials with the Sumter County School District have confirmed the district was over budget by over \$6 million. In a statement, district public information coordinator Shelly Galloway said officials discovered the budget issues following an annual audit. "The school district was over budget by \$6.2 million in the last fiscal year leaving a fund balance of \$106,449," the statement said. The district blamed overspending on "instructional expenditures and support services expenditures." District leaders are now in the process of going through the budget to see if money can now be saved. "Our priority is to build our fund balance back up, and some very difficult decisions will have to be made in terms of cost savings measures," the statement said.

The State: Richland tourism funding under review, could be awarded on compliance basis

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article121288858.htm>

Sara Ellis

Richland County is reviewing the way it awards hospitality tax money to organizations that are supposed to use the dollars to promote tourism. There will be an internal audit of the past three years' use of those funds and a recommendation for a new approach to their distribution, the county announced in a news release late Thursday. Hospitality tax dollars, which come from the county's 2 percent sales tax on prepared food and beverages, currently are awarded by County Council through an advocacy-based system. Each council member can lobby other council members to award funding to particular local organizations. A majority of County Council must approve each award.

Aiken Standard: Aiken GOP Executive Committee votes to put Project Jackson stadium costs on primary ballot

http://www.aikenstandard.com/news/aiken-gop-executive-committee-votes-to-put-project-jackson-stadium/article_8362b1b2-c391-11e6-8e40-ffc94da5579a.html

North Augusta voters will be able to voice their opinions about Project Jackson at the polls. The Aiken GOP Executive Committee has voted to put the multi-million dollar Project Jackson stadium cost on the North Augusta primary election ballot in February, giving voters a chance to weigh in on the partially publicly funded development. The outcome of the ballot question would not be binding for North Augusta City Council, but provide an outlet for voters to have their say whether public funds should be used in the development, according to KT Ruthven, former chairman of the Aiken GOP. "There are strong opinions both ways about Project Jackson, an advisory ballot referendum is a very fair way to determine the majorities opinion," he said, adding the executive committee can vote to allow questions like these since the task of the municipal primary is the responsibility of the local party, which includes both logistics and cost.

Post and Courier: Boeing's 737 MAX pays a visit to company's North Charleston workers

http://www.postandcourier.com/business/boeing-s-max-pays-a-visit-to-company-s-north/article_56ee9fc4-c3aa-11e6-ab8a-2303755d4500.html

David Wren

Unlike their cross-town counterparts at Boeing Co.'s 787 Dreamliner plant, workers at the Propulsion South Carolina facility in North Charleston rarely get to see the results of their work in a final product. But on Friday, they got a close-up view when Boeing flew one of its 737 MAX test planes to North Charleston so dozens of workers could climb aboard and check out the company's newest single-

aisle commercial jet in person. The local propulsion center, located about 10 miles from the main Dreamliner campus, designs and builds engine nacelle inlets and designs nacelle fan cowls for the 737 MAX."This is really cool for the team," said Charlie Hix, the plant's director. Hix said the engine parts his plant produces are typically placed on a pallet and shipped to Seattle, with the only feedback coming if something goes wrong.

President-elect Trump News:

Associated Press: The Latest: Obama silent on need to brief electors on Russia

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/ff02d69aeb3e46a8b03fa4651766c186/latest-obama-year-end-news-conference-cites-gains>

President Barack Obama says he won't express an opinion on whether electors should receive a briefing on Russian involvement in the U.S. election before they cast ballots at meetings across the country Monday. He says, "It's the American people's job, not the electors' job to decide my successor." The president describes the electoral college as a "vestige" and a "carry-over" from history. But he says that if politicians have a strong message the popular vote and electoral college vote should align. Obama adds that there's "no silver bullet" or "easy fix" to explain Donald Trump's surprise victory and increased political partisanship. Obama is speaking at his annual year-end news conference.

Associated Press: Obama urges Trump to take foreign election impact seriously

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/177916eeadfb4b48a6b0c2f71c396d8e/obama-face-questions-russian-hacking-trump-syria>

President Barack Obama suggested strongly on Friday that Russia's Vladimir Putin knew about the email hackings that roiled the U.S. presidential race, and he urged his successor, Republican Donald Trump, to back a bipartisan investigation into the matter. "Not much happens in Russia without Vladimir Putin," Obama said in his year-end news conference. The president said he had warned Putin there would be serious consequences if he did not "cut it out," though Obama did not specify the extent or timing of any U.S. retaliation for the hacking, which many Democrats believe contributed to Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton. Obama also expressed bewilderment over Republican lawmakers and voters alike who now say they approve of Putin, declaring, "Ronald Reagan would roll over in his grave." Trump has dismissed recent talk about hacking and the election as "ridiculous."

Associated Press: Obama vows retaliation for suspected Russian hacking

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/e2921560078f4d0e9603ab0b8f5e3aea/white-house-suggests-putin-was-involved-us-hacking>

President Barack Obama is promising that the U.S. will retaliate against Russia for its suspected meddling in America's election process, an accusation the Kremlin has vehemently denied. As the White House grew more bullish about suggesting President Vladimir Putin was personally involved, Obama said he'd spoken directly to Putin about his concerns about Russian meddling. He said whenever a foreign government tries to interfere in U.S. elections, the nation must take action "and we will at a time and place of our own choosing." "We have been working hard to make sure that what we do is proportional, that what we do is meaningful," Obama said in an NPR News interview airing Friday. Obama's remarks were the clearest indication that whatever response the U.S. is planning, it hasn't happened yet. The White House has insisted for months that when the U.S. did retaliate, it might not be made public, a position that has created uncertainty about the strength and timing of any response.

Associated Press: Trump moves to cancel deals in Azerbaijan, Georgia

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/b6ad7c24f59e491d9bfbfa24d540210a/trump-canceling-hotel-deal-azerbaijan-and-possibly-georgia>

The Trump Organization has canceled a licensing deal for a hotel in Azerbaijan and is taking steps to do the same for a project in neighboring Georgia, part of a string of recent efforts by the president-

elect to extricate his business from thorny relationships five weeks before he takes office. Trump lawyer Alan Garten said Friday that developers in both projects failed to meet terms of licensing deals. He described the moves as "normal housekeeping" and not part of a strategy to reduce potential conflicts of interests. The moves by the Trump Organization follow a cancellation earlier this week of a licensing deal for a hotel in Brazil. The New York-based company also recently shut down four companies registered in Delaware that appear connected with a possible Saudi Arabia business venture.

National News:

Associated Press: Dangerous wind chills puts parts of US in the deep freeze

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/a71faa7f32f54a78be5f7aa50e9fbe4f/dangerous-wind-chills-put-northeastern-us-deep-freeze>

Low temperatures and high winds have put the Northeastern U.S. in a deep freeze. Dangerous wind chills of 20 to 30 below in parts of the region made for some crippling conditions Friday.

"You are talking about 30 degrees below normal highs. That is pretty darn cold," said National Weather Service meteorologist James Brown in Maine. "This is pretty much a piece of Arctic air that came off the North Pole and came into New England." Forecasters said a storm will follow the frigid weather, bringing chances for snow, sleet and freezing rain across much of the country. Some schools closed early Thursday and many others delayed opening Friday to avoid a bone-chilling wait at the bus stop. "We're not strangers to these sorts of bitter temperatures on Mount Washington's summit," senior weather observer Mike Carmon said in the weather observatory's blog at the highest peak in the Northeast. "However, over the last few winters, it's generally late January or February before we experience this sort of polar air outbreak."

United Nations News:

Associated Press: US supports French proposal for independent Aleppo monitors

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/660754dd58064ef1a5be333242dfd2e1/us-supports-french-proposal-independent-aleppo-monitors>

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said Friday she favors a French-drafted U.N. resolution calling for independent international monitors to oversee the evacuation of civilians and rebel fighters from war-torn Aleppo. But Russia's ambassador was not as quick to embrace the plan, saying "it takes weeks to deploy observers." The comments by Samantha Power and Vitaly Churkin to reporters came after a closed-door Security Council meeting called by France on the Syrian government takeover of eastern Aleppo, which had been a rebel stronghold in the civil war since 2012. Power said the council could vote this weekend on the resolution, but an emergency special session of the General Assembly is possible if the council reaches a stalemate. "The least that Russia can do is ensure that monitors are there," Power said. "Surely that is not too much to ask."

Associated Press: Aleppo evacuation halted as both sides trade blame

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/1371ef6c96744265967c1517468d231f/thousands-more-syrians-leave-rebel-enclave-aleppo>

Diplomats sought to salvage the evacuation of eastern Aleppo after it stalled Friday amid recriminations by both sides in Syria's civil war, raising fears the cease-fire could collapse with thousands still desperate to escape the rebel enclave. The Aleppo evacuation was suspended after a report of shooting at a crossing point into the enclave. The Syrian government pulled out its buses that since Thursday had been ferrying out people from the ancient city that has suffered under intense bombardment, fierce battles and a prolonged siege. "The carnage in Syria remains a gaping hole in the global conscience," said U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. "Aleppo is now a synonym for hell." The halt also appeared to be linked to a separate deal to remove thousands of people from the government-held Shiite villages of Foua and Kfarya that are under siege by the rebels. The Syrian government says those evacuations and the one in eastern Aleppo must be done simultaneously, but

the rebels say there's no connection.

Associated Press: UN chief speaks to reports he'll run for South Korea leader

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/fd5f15b006ea493eae24363412e13f89/un-chief-speaks-reports-hell-run-south-korea-leader>

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressed mounting speculation that he will run for president of South Korea on Friday, saying he will decide how to best help his country when he returns home in early January after 10 years as U.N. chief. Ban told his final U.N. press conference that after taking some rest he plans to meet "as many people as possible," including political leaders, members of civil society and his friends. "I will really consider seriously how best and what I should and I could do for my country," he said. Ban said South Korea is "in turmoil" following the explosive corruption scandal involving President Park Geun-hye, whose powers were suspended last week after lawmakers voted to impeach her. "I can understand and share the anxiety of people about the future of their country," he said. "And this is one of the biggest challenges the Korean people are encountering."

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