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Subject: Clips - Sunday, March 20, 2016

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## Clips – Sunday, March 20, 2016

### Governor Nikki Haley News:

**The State:** EXCLUSIVE: SC has paid \$40 million since 2010 to settle road claims

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article67103462.html>

Jamie Self

The state has shelled out nearly \$40 million since 2010 to settle road claims and lawsuits against the Transportation Department. And those costs are rising. In the 2005-2006 budget year, the state paid \$4.3 million to settle claims against the Transportation Department. Costs reached \$8.2 million in 2014. Driven by pothole damages, the number of claims has climbed — averaging 2,600 over the past two years, up from 1,600 a year on average during the four preceding years.

**Note:** S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley backs a Senate plan to spend \$400 million on roads — an amount Transportation Secretary Hall has said would be a welcome start to fixing the state's roads and bridges.

**The State:** Scope: DJJ crisis averted? If so, it'll be because of this new law

<http://www.thestate.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/cindi-ross-scope/article66922267.html>

Cindi Ross Scope

FOR MORE THAN a decade, the narrative on the Department of Juvenile Justice was the amazing job that former Family Court Judge Bill Byers did transforming the place into a miracle agency from a deeply troubled prison where kids went to be abused and schooled in how to become grown-up criminals. That narrative remained intact when Gov. Nikki Haley tapped first his protege, and then, early last year, her protege to run the agency. I doubt the agency could have kept its problems quiet forever. But if past is prologue, the secret would have come out when there was a crisis — perhaps when a riot ended in dead children on the inside, or an escape ended in a deadly rampage on the outside. Legislators would have been outraged and demanded that heads roll. They would have rewritten laws to make sure such things never happened again. That, after all, is how we have always handled problems at state agencies: after they turned into crises.

**Post and Courier:** Barnwell and other small towns face new reality after rural hospitals close

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160319/PC16/160329979>

Lauren Sausser

Three years after Gov. Nikki Haley's administration began bolstering rural hospitals with millions more dollars, three of them, including Southern Palmetto, have closed in 10 months. Marlboro Park Hospital in Bennettsville shut down in May. Williamsburg County Hospital was forced to close in October due to building damage caused by rain. And, after 60 years in Barnwell County, staff at Southern Palmetto Hospital treated patients for the final time in January. Rural hospitals not only provide emergency health care to residents in small towns. They also employ a lot of people. "We lost so many jobs," he said. "We're not talking about people who are making \$7.50 an hour. We're talking about skilled labor."

**Note:** One of Haley's solutions — a \$40 million hospital "Transformation Fund" — will expire this summer. S.C. Medicaid Director Christian Soura said he will not ask the Legislature to renew the program, which was meant to encourage larger hospitals to forge partnerships with the smaller, struggling facilities. To date, only \$8 million of the \$40 million has been spent.

**Note:** Conservative state leaders, including Haley, have pushed back against the federal Affordable Care Act, most notably by declining billions of federal dollars that could have been used to expand eligibility for the low-income Medicaid program in the Palmetto State.

## **S.C. General Assembly News:**

**Post and Courier:** House of Representatives prepares for budget week

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160318/PC1603/160329978>

Cynthia Roldan

A 22-year-old education-equity lawsuit, the damage caused by October's floods and crumbling roads are among the hundreds of spending matters the S.C. House of Representatives will tackle this week when debate starts on the state budget. The House's budget panel signed off on their roughly \$7.5 billion spending plan in February, giving the rest of the chamber time for review. By Monday, dozens of new amendments could be raised by any of the House's 124 members. There is an estimated \$1.3 billion in unspent and un-allocated funds in South Carolina's coffers, with \$380 million of it seen as new money the state collected above initial forecasts. Practically every lawmaker can make a bid for a bit of the extra cash for projects and proposals in their home district.

**Note:** There is also \$130 million parked in the budget that initially was to be spent on an income tax deduction that Gov. Nikki Haley called for when she told lawmakers she would support a gas tax increase only if it were coupled with an income tax reduction. But that was in 2015. Since then, the Senate has passed a roads bill that does not raise the gas tax and takes \$400 million out of the extra \$1.3 billion budget writers have this year to spend, removing the need for an income tax cut.

## **S.C. Politics News:**

**The State:** The Buzz: Here comes part two of SC's GOP presidential race — the delegate fight

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article66872137.html>

Andy Shain

The S.C. GOP presidential primary was a month ago, but the fight in the Palmetto State is not over. At least one campaign is lining up consultants to get friendly S.C. delegates elected to this summer's Republican National Convention in Cleveland. All 50 S.C. GOP delegates must vote for primary winner Donald Trump on the convention's first ballot. But if no candidate wins a majority in first-round voting, the S.C. delegates can vote for any candidate in subsequent rounds. That gives campaigns that are able to get their backers into delegates' seats the chance to sway the nomination in subsequent votes.

**Post and Courier:** 'We're not there yet': Members of Congress learn different lessons from Emanuel AME Church shooting

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160319/PC1603/160319316>

Emma Dumain

Like the survivors and family members of victims of the June shooting at Emanuel AME Church, U.S. Rep. John Lewis knows something about the power of forgiveness. Though Lewis has told this story many times before, it took on new meaning in the presence of those directly affected by the church shooting nine months ago, not to mention the dozens of outsiders who are in South Carolina this weekend to learn something about racial healing. But Lewis also spoke to the obvious: It will take more than words and feelings to stop the rash of hate and violent deeds, in Charleston and anywhere else.

**Times and Democrat:** No time to celebrate on the farm

[http://thetandd.com/news/opinion/no-time-to-celebrate-on-the-farm/article\\_bf88c72e-ecaf-54af-8581-d232cb55a168.html](http://thetandd.com/news/opinion/no-time-to-celebrate-on-the-farm/article_bf88c72e-ecaf-54af-8581-d232cb55a168.html)

Jenny Spears

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack's words from Tuesday's National Agriculture Day came as South Carolina farming is at risk. The state's top-producing industry is holding out hope the state Legislature will come through with a program to provide financial assistance in the wake of devastating losses from drought and flooding in 2015. Without the aid, some farmers will not be able to plant this year, which will spell their economic ruin. In Columbia, National Ag Day did bring hope. Legislation providing farmers \$40 million in state aid for planting advanced with the Senate Finance Committee approving by a 14-3 vote allowing farmers to apply for grants of up to \$100,000 each. The grants could equal 20 percent of a farmer's total loss.

**Note:** But the legislation, which has already been approved in the House, still must go before the full Senate. And Gov. Nikki Haley, who on Tuesday issued a proclamation marking National Ag even as she opposes special assistance to farmers for flood damage, has not made clear whether she will support the \$40 million plan.

### **Opinion/Editorial:**

**Sun News:** Offshore drilling, testing could be revisited in a few years

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/opinion/editorials/article67131597.html>

Editorial

Coastal communities along four states were unified in opposing a proposal to open areas for testing to determine the viability of oil and natural gas production. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management could have sold leases from 2017 to 2022. U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell noted the grassroots opposition: "When you factor in conflicts with national defense, economic activities such as fishing and tourism, and opposition from many local communities, it simply doesn't make sense to move forward with any lease sales in the coming five years."

**Note:** Gov. Nikki Haley deserves much credit for a variety of economic development, including solar energy. She has been disappointing in continuing to call for offshore oil and gas exploration and protecting the ocean environment. We generally can't have both at the same time. The bottom line is that we have more oil than we know what to do with, consumption is declining and if in the distant future Atlantic oil may be needed, it will still be there.

**The Herald:** Reversal of offshore drilling plan is welcome

<http://www.heraldonline.com/opinion/editorials/article66907752.html>

Editorial

The Obama administration's decision Tuesday to reverse its plan to allow offshore drilling along the southeast Atlantic coast was a triumph of the democratic process and the power of public opinion. Last year, the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management released a draft of a five-year-plan that included leasing waters off the coast from Georgia to Virginia beginning in 2021. The bureau also asked groups potentially affected by the plan to send in their comments. Officials might not have realized the response that request would unleash. The government received more than a million comments on the proposal, most of them negative. Residents in every state within the proposed drilling area organized grassroots groups to fight the plan. But the response from South Carolina was exceptionally vocal.

**Post and Courier:** Low marriage rate has high S.C. costs

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160320/PC1002/160329947>

Opinion

Teach kids how to get and keep a good job. And teach kids how to make and maintain a good marriage. We spend billions of dollars every year on the first and almost nothing on the second. South Carolina ranks 50th — dead last — in America for the percentage of parents who are married and have children under 18, according to a report by the American Enterprise Institute, citing U.S. Census data. Only about 48 percent of South Carolina adults 25-59 are married, the lowest in the nation with the exception of heathen New York. This correlates to all kinds of things, none of them good.

**Note:** Gov. Nikki Haley's commerce secretary, Bobby Hitt, has been a remarkably successful champion for bringing jobs to South Carolina, helping to convince Volvo, Daimler and others that the state's trifecta of lower costs, tax incentives and "secret sauce" of job training make this the place to be. Now the governor should do the same for marriage. What we need is a cabinet-level Secretary for Families and Marriage, a champion for the idea that good marriages are good for South Carolina. We need to promote incentives for marriage and root out disincentives. Republicans and Democrats should be able to agree on this.

**Sun News:** Gov. Nikky Haley, Ted Cruz two peas in a pod

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/article67132302.html>

Letter

It was no surprise that Governor Haley supports Ted Cruz. They are both made of the same fiber: ultra conservatives, who are rigid in their thinking with no room for negotiating or give and take. In fact, our state government in South Carolina is even worse than the federal government – complete gridlock. Cruz and Haley espouse ultra conservatism. They believe that the government should be as small as possible and tax the citizens only enough to provide for the common defense of our country and that the United States should not be involved in world events any more than necessary for our own safety and well being. Many of these goals are at odds with each other.

**Post and Courier:** Graham makes case to settle for Cruz

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160320/PC1002/160329950>

Opinion

"Sen. Lindsey Graham has rarely held back in his criticism of Ted Cruz, but the South Carolina Republican said his endorsement of Cruz on Thursday shows what he's willing to do to try to save the party from Donald Trump. " 'The bottom line is that I'm very passionate about my nation,' Graham said on Thursday. 'I'm very passionate about my party. People can take what I say with a grain of salt, but I've come to conclude that Mr. Trump is not a Republican. He's an interloper. That he's jumped into this race and it's all about Trump. His foreign policy is gibberish. He's appealing to our darker side and Ted Cruz is a much more reliable Republican than Donald Trump.' " Graham, in essence, is saying to Republicans who have been very wary of Cruz (with good reason, based on his antics in the Senate) that Cruz is simply not as bad as Trump. Graham is modeling grown-up political behavior, making the best of available options.

**Greenville News:** GOP 'elites' often endorse their cronies

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/opinion/readers/2016/03/20/letter-gop-elites-often-endorse-cronies/81979434/>

Letter

Isn't it wonderful to see the members of the elite class who think their endorsement is so influential get shot down like they have been shooting down our preferences in the off-year elections? Sens. Lindsey Graham and John McCain with their narcissism thought their endorsements of Jeb Bush would be so admired. Jeb Bush is gone. You can bet Graham and McCain's arrogance isn't. They've been establishment from day one.

**Note:** Then came the endorsement by a few more of the influentials, who were very sure their elite status would magically turn Sen. Marco Rubio into a Gang of Eight success story. Again the people rejected these establishment folks, "these" being Gov. Nikki Haley, Sen. Tim Scott and Rep. Trey Gowdy. They will continue to support the Washington, D.C. clique.

**Post and Courier:** Give community a say on utility projects

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160320/PC1002/160329954>

Opinion

Were residents ever surprised when massive, metal 100-foot tall SCE&G utility poles popped up right in the middle of the largest park in peninsular Charleston two years ago. Actually, they were appalled — and with good reason. Any reasonable person might have imagined that such a dramatic and



unsightly change to Hampton Park, a beloved green space and quiet urban oasis, would have necessitated a rigorous public review before approval. Indeed, it should have. But all that the ill-considered project required in the way of public notification was contacting a few nearby property owners who had granted property easements.

**Post and Courier:** School district awash in red ink

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160320/PC1002/160329955>

Opinion

If understanding the problem is the first step to fixing it, the Charleston County School District is beginning a tough budgetary journey out of an ocean of red ink. The fix will require cutting teacher positions (117 so far), increasing class sizes slightly, eliminating central office positions (80 so far) and possibly closing small schools that cost far more to operate per student than others. Some of the district's 120 intervention programs, such as its multi-million dollar literacy initiatives, will likely be eliminated unless the board decides they are effective enough to keep. And most frustrating, none of this had to happen. Indeed, Charleston County School Board member Todd Garrett wants the board to hire legal counsel to see if staff broke any laws on the way to building an \$18.9 million budget shortfall for 2015-2016.

**South Carolina News:**

**Post and Courier:** Savannah River Nuclear Solutions sued for allegedly overcharging government

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160319/PC16/160319317>

Derrek Asberry

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is being sued by the United States for allegedly using \$5 million in federal money to make purchases for home offices, bids and proposals. The lawsuit, filed Friday, claims SRNS and one of its parent companies, Fluor Federal, violated their contract with the Department of Energy by overcharging the government multiple times over an 8-year span dating to 2008.

**Aiken Standard:** National Nuclear Security Administration recommends MOX shutdown

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160319/AIK0101/160319355>

Thomas Gardiner

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development met Wednesday to discuss the fiscal year 2017 budget request. The request seeks the termination of MOX, which includes the Savannah River Site's Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility. In his opening remarks, chairman of the subcommittee, Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander, said the National Nuclear Security Administration "recommended that Congress fund a different process, called dilute and dispose." The proposal, known as downblending, would dilute the plutonium at SRS and dispose of it at a federal repository.

**Sumter Item:** Locals speaking out beat Big Oil

<http://www.theitem.com/stories/opincolgraham,265173>

Opinion

This week the Obama administration reversed course "after an uproar from local communities over environmental concerns," according to various reports. What happened was that people in the coastal communities of South Carolina and the other affected states mobilized and started speaking out and raising awareness in their own local newspapers, on television and on social media, and it ultimately helped stop what seemed an inevitable outcome.

**Note:** Our own Gov. Nikki Haley was unfortunately in favor of the drilling plan, so it's only fair to take some liberties with her trademark phrase: "It's a great day in South Carolina - especially when there's no oil washing up the beach."

**The State:** Location unknown: No count of lead waterlines in SC

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/environment/2016/03/19/location-unknown-no-count-lead-waterlines-sc/81934836/>

Nathaniel Cary

Water systems across South Carolina, including the Greenville Water System, do not know where lead service lines or partially-lead lines may be located or how many lead lines remain in use, which makes it difficult to track which homes may be most at risk of lead-contaminated drinking water, an investigation by The Greenville News has found. At best, most water systems have an estimate based on paper records of when service lines were installed. Some, like Greenville Water, the state's largest water system which provides water to about 500,000 people, have begun to digitize records, but short of digging up lines to physically inspect them, water systems can only guess at the number of lines that may have potential for lead to leach into customers' drinking water.

**Post and Courier:** Program that helps S.C. residents avoid foreclosure extended, gets more funding  
<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160320/PC05/160329995>

In 2010 South Carolina was declared one of the 18 states, along with the District of Columbia, "hardest hit" by the recession and the housing market crash. With that designation came a share of \$7.6 billion in federal aid to help people avoid foreclosure — a fund that as of Dec. 31 had helped 10,373 South Carolina residents and their families. The Palmetto State's initial funding of nearly \$295 million has not been exhausted, and the federal government recently announced additional funding and extended the deadline to spend it all. This program has clearly been underutilized by South Carolina homeowners, so hopefully the extra time and additional \$22 million that the SC HELP program is slated to receive will translate to more people being helped.

**Post and Courier:** Trade block: BMW touts benefits of hotly debated import-export deal  
<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160319/PC05/160319362>

David Wren

Every time a new BMW vehicle is exported from the Port of Charleston to a European country, a 10 percent tariff is added to the sticker price. Manfred Erlacher, president of the automaker's manufacturing plant in Greer, thinks it's time to put an end that practice. Last week, as the 2 millionth South Carolina-made BMW was shipped out of Charleston, Erlacher called on the U.S. government to approve the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreement, or TTIP. The long-debated free trade deal would eliminate the fees that BMW says threatens its competitiveness overseas and its manufacturing capability in the U.S.

**The State:** Avenging Angel? A look at 5 of Donnie Myers' more memorable death penalty cases  
<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article67122927.html>

John Monk

During his 40-year career, Donnie Myers never shed a tear for the killers he tried, 28 of whom he convinced juries to send to Death Row — some of them twice after the defendants won new trials or sentencing hearings. "When I get into court, I don't even want to give that person (a killer) a bottle of air to breath from," Myers once told a reporter in 1990. No prosecutor in South Carolina has tried more death penalty cases than Myers. And he quickly drew nicknames like "Doctor Death" and "Death Penalty Donnie" for pursuing the death penalty frequently and frequently getting a jury to agree with him.

**Independent Mail:** Change in scale will aid athletes  
<http://www.independentmail.com/sports/change-in-scale-will-aid-athletes-2e5926e7-d162-4178-e053-0100007f0d0f-372801641.html>

Lake Morris

Major changes may be coming for South Carolina high school students next academic year and it may help athletes looking to sign college scholarships. State Superintendent Molly Spearman recently announced that South Carolina will move from a current 7-point grading scale to a 10-point

scale. Spearman said the move is to remedy a long-running complaint from state athletic directors saying South Carolina athletes have not been on a level playing field academically with athletes from other states since the 7-point scale was mandated in 2000-2001. North Carolina voted to move to a 10-point scale in 2015.

## **Local News:**

**Associated Press:** Man tells deputies he shot trespasser at Greenville home

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=8kLR3yHw](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=8kLR3yHw)

SC State Wire

Greenville County deputies say a homeowner has shot and killed a suspicious person on the resident's property. In a news release, investigators said the homeowner called police around 9:15 a. m. Saturday to report the shooting. Deputies say the person shot was dead when officers arrived. The home is on several acres of land about 10 miles north of Greenville and was built to look like a German castle. The names of the homeowner and the dead person have not been released. Deputies say they are investigating the shooting and no charges have been filed.

**Associated Press:** Anderson junior firefighters charged with setting blazes

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=joagOud0](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=joagOud0)

SC State Wire

Authorities say two teenage junior firefighters in Anderson have been charged with setting fires. The State Law Enforcement Division charged a 17-year-old and a 16-year-old boy with third-degree arson. SLED says the fires were set this year at empty homes and businesses and in woods. No injuries were reported. Anderson Fire Department officials say the teens were part of the agency's junior firefighter program and have been dismissed.

**Aiken Standard:** Residents converse with law enforcement at annual Kiss A Cop Breakfast

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160319/AIK0101/160319356>

Tripp Girardeau

Cumberland Village Senior Living Community hosted its sixth annual Kiss A Cop Appreciation Breakfast on Friday, where residents showed their admiration and gratitude for local law enforcement. "It allows our residents the opportunity to mingle with the officers," said Samantha Peel, director of sales and marketing at Cumberland Village. "And this gives us a way to give back to those who serve our community and for all they do."

**The Herald:** York Co. seeks savings after Pennies for Progress road projects go millions over budget

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/article67126487.html>

Bristow Marchant

By the end of next year, York County residents will be asked to approve a new round of road projects funded by a fourth Pennies for Progress sales tax. In the meantime, county officials are trying to determine how much the county has spent on the three previous rounds of project as cost overruns are estimated at \$100 million. A study by a residents committee appointed by York County Council's Pennies for Progress Committee found large overruns on projects from the first two rounds of Pennies dating to 1997. The final amount spent on Pennies 1 was \$84.9 million more than voters approved. The Pennies 2 package approved in 2003 – and has yet to be completed – is also set to exceed initial cost estimates, even after the number of projects was reduced.

**Post and Courier:** School district's money problem has many mothers and fathers

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160320/PC16/160329964>

Brian Hicks

Today the school district is looking at a nearly \$19 million shortfall after a detailed financial audit revealed myriad problems in its accounting. Now the district is talking about cutting teachers, increasing classroom sizes and other apocalyptic measures just to make ends meet. It's the most

serious crisis Charleston schools have faced in a long time. A lot of that shortfall isn't missing money, it is simply the result of ludicrously sunny revenue projections for the 2014-15 year. But problems in the district have been festering for years. There was clearly massive over-spending at times, chronic screw-ups and sometimes a willful disregard for the district's budget.

**Independent Mail:** Alternative schools to get students back on track

<http://www.independentmail.com/news/education/alternative-schools-to-get-kids-back-on-track--2d1307a2-d63a-3cf0-e053-0100007f6b04-372738011.html>

Frances Parrish

The mission of an alternative school is to help students get back on track. Alternative school directors in Anderson, Oconee and Pickens counties are doing what they can to give their students the best chance. There's no one way to run an alternative school. The state department of education has a list of recommended strategies, such as small class sizes, counseling, community partnership or character education, but it's up to districts to decide how best to serve students. No matter what the strategy, Adams said the goal is the same: to help students become successful.

**Post and Courier:** Lodging for VA patients' families in the works

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160319/PC16/160329960>

Diane Knick

Trux and Durbin Emerson's desire to help veterans ultimately led to a \$10 million campaign for a new lodging facility for families near the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center. The Fisher House, similar in concept to a Ronald McDonald House, could open as early as next year on the site of the former McAlister-Smith Funeral Home at 150 Wentworth St. Family members of patients at the hospital will be able to stay for free in the 14,000-square-foot facility, which will include 16 bedroom suites and common kitchen, living and dining areas, said Trux Emerson, who retired from a residential real estate career and now lives on Kiawah Island.

**Post and Courier:** Folbot folding boat-maker suspends North Charleston operations

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160319/PC05/160319331>

Warren L. Wise

Folding kayak-maker Folbot said Saturday it is suspending operations at its North Charleston factory to restructure the business. "We will not be producing new kayaks or taking orders at this time," the company said in a statement. "We are hopeful that this will be a time of renewal for our historic brand." The company's announcement didn't seem to close the door completely on its future, calling the suspension of operations a "transition" and saying it will keep its social media outlets "live and active." "We are exploring all options, including new investors," companay head Eric Thome said.

**Herald-Journal:** Spartanburg Staymobile owners to lead franchise expansion effort

<http://www.goupstate.com/article/20160319/articles/160319645>

Trevor Anderson

Three Upstate entrepreneurs will help take Staymobile's growth to the next level. Brian Hammond and Eliot Stone of Spartanburg and Will Kellett of Greenville have reached an agreement with the Atlanta-based mobile device repair service to lead its franchise and sales support. Their company, Staymobile Launch LLC, will be responsible for opening 150 stores and creating about 600 jobs across the U.S. during the next five years.

**Herald-Journal:** Spartanburg Housing Authority receives \$229K grant for resident services

<http://www.goupstate.com/article/20160319/articles/160319646>

Alyssa Mulliger

The Spartanburg Housing Authority is one of three housing agencies in South Carolina that will receive a federal grant to address public housing needs. A program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recently awarded \$32 million in grants to public housing authorities and nonprofit organizations. The program helps housing authorities hire and retain service



coordinators to assist public housing residents with education, job training and financial literacy services. The Spartanburg Housing Authority's grant totals \$229,293, and will go toward the Connections program, which is available to all Spartanburg public housing residents.

**Island Packet:** Hilton Head's Coligny Beach named among East Coast's Top 10 best beaches

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/article67073082.html>

Hilton Head Island's Coligny Beach Park has been named as one of USA Today's top East Coast beaches. The beach made the media company's "Top 10 Best East Coast Beach" list as part of its "10Best Readers' Choice" travel award contest. Coligny Beach Park was listed ninth along with other such popular beach destinations as Sanibel Island's Bowman Beach and North Carolina's Outer Banks. The selections were based on criteria such as beauty, things to do, local culture and popularity.

**Island Packet:** Documentary film event about Lyme disease to feature Hilton Head, Bluffton residents

<http://www.islandpacket.com/entertainment/local-events/article67072942.html>

Mindy Lucas

A new documentary film about Lyme disease featuring a Hilton Head Island woman and her son and will show at a special screening event coming up in April. "Under Our Skin" — which tells the untold story of Lyme disease and those who suffer from the debilitating illness — will feature Elise Brady and her son Jared, of Hilton Head. Both Brady and Jared were diagnosed with Lyme disease in 2001.

## National News:

**Associated Press:** Pro-Israel policy conference nervously awaits Trump speech

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:0fe17e082ee14a3fb815418ec2a7a607>

Matthew Lee

As America's leading pro-Israel group prepares to hear this week from nearly all the presidential candidates, most eyes in the crowd will be on GOP front-runner Donald Trump. He's the wild card whose previous comments about Israel have created some anxiety among many people who will attend the American Israel Public Affairs Committee policy conference in Washington. Expect Republicans Ted Cruz and John Kasich to espouse standard conservative fare.

**Associated Press:** Eyeing new future with US, Cubans await visit by Obama

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:f720c854ada84ffe8269b32a6e6d994e>

Josh Lederman and Julie Pace

Eyeing a new future with the U.S., Cubans are preparing their famed capital for a long-awaited visit by President Barack Obama, who will make history when Air Force One touches down in Havana on Sunday. Obama's visit to the island nation will serve as a powerful symbol of the relationship that the U.S. and Cuba are now forging. For Obama, the 2 1/2-day trip offers one of the last, best chances to advance the diplomatic opening with President Raul Castro before Obama leaves office early next year. Ahead of Obama's arrival, American flags were raised in parts of Havana alongside Cuban flags, an improbable image for those who lived through more than a half-century in which the U.S. and Cuba were bitter foes.

**Associated Press:** Steps Obama has taken to ease US restrictions on Cuba

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:dd261c10fb674d3eadf5047e62ee6548>

President Barack Obama aims to use his historic trip to Cuba starting Sunday to further his bid to restore ties after a half-century of acrimony. Though his visit will be one of the most visible symbols of the new approach, Obama has been rolling back restrictions on Cuba, punching hole after hole in the U.S. trade embargo.

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