



Jasper County
Sun
Ridgeland, SC
Circ. 1950
From Page:
6
11/11/2015
65216



148
OTHER VOICES: EDITORIALS FROM ACROSS THE STATE

The Times & Democrat of Orangeburg on manufacturing jobs

"South Carolina continues to lead the nation's manufacturing renaissance," S.C. Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt said in an announcement on an industry expansion in Williston.

Hitt and Gov. Nikki Haley speak regularly about South Carolina's manufacturing sector thriving since they took office. They cite 28,000 new manufacturing jobs over the past four years, more than created in Georgia and North Carolina.

During Haley's tenure as governor, South Carolina has become the top state for exporting tire and passenger vehicles.

The list of top companies locating or planning to locate in the state since she took office in 2011 is impressive: Continental Tire plant in Sumter County, Giti tire in Chester County, the Daimler van plant expansion in North Charleston and Volvo in Berkeley County.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers show the total number of factory jobs rose 12.7 percent in the state between 2010 and 2015 to more than 231,000, a bigger percentage increase than in 39 other states.

And the prospects for the future are good.

Projections by the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce are that manufacturing jobs will grow by 16,000-17,000 between 2010 and 2020. And growth in key manufacturing areas such as the Midlands (9 percent) and Upstate (12 percent) is expected to be strong.

But South Carolina cannot rest on its laurels. The competition is intense and nearby.

Recently, Site Selection magazine named Georgia as the state with the Top Business Climate for the third consecutive year. As revealed in the November 2015 issue of the magazine, research based in part on a survey of corporate real estate executives and in part on the magazine's index of criteria led to Georgia repeating its first-place finish. And South Carolina's neighbor to the north,

North Carolina, is second. Kentucky, Louisiana and Texas round out the top five.

"Capital investors tell us the ideas we put in place are actually working," Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal said. "Our tax reform in the manufacturing arena, for example, to remove the sales tax from energy use was a huge boost to our manufacturing sector."

The governor also points to removing as many regulatory impediments as possible and providing a well-educated and trained workforce as deliverables of particular interest to companies looking at Georgia locations. Corporate executives routinely cite Quick Start, Georgia's workforce training program; logistics assets, such as the Port of Savannah and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport; and tax reform as the factors that brought them to Georgia.

Fifty percent of the overall Business Climate Ranking is based on a survey of corporate site selectors who are asked to rank the states based on their recent experience of locating facilities in them.

The other 50 percent is based on an index of seven criteria: performance in Site Selection's annual competitiveness ranking; total Conway Projects Database-compliant facilities in 2014; total new facilities in 2014 per capita; total 2015 new projects year to date; total 2015 projects year to date per capita; state tax burdens on mature firms and on new firms according to the Tax Foundation and KPMG Location Matters analysis.

South Carolina ranked 13th overall and fifth in the survey of corporate executives.

The state fell down in the magazine's index of seven criteria, notably ranking 47th in total number of new plants locating in the state in 2014 and 45th in new plants per capita in the same year. The ranking is a lot better for January-August 2015, with the state at 11th and ninth, respectively in the new-plants scoring.

The battle is fierce and the top contenders among states are our neighbors.

Guest Editorial 32 + 148 + 1

Why South Carolina's legislative session should be much, much shorter

BY CECILIA BROWN

Editorialists and commentators have chastised the South Carolina legislature relentlessly for failing to get anything done during the 2015 session. In fact, though, they did plenty of work.

This year our Legislature met from January to July, and during that time 1,336 bills were filed between the House and Senate. Of those, 131 were passed by lawmakers. In addition, 950 resolutions were filed, and all but 64 of those passed.

The question, of course, is this: How many of these were actually worth legislators spending over half a year in Columbia?

The length of South Carolina's legislative session has consequences. Studies have found that professional, full-time legislatures are more prone to pressure from lobbyists – and this translates into higher spending and more favors for special interests.

Consider this year's attempt to deal with roads. There are two ways to devote new revenue to roads: raise taxes or cut spending. But lobbyists – in this case, lobbyists working for companies and industries that would benefit from additional spending on roads – aren't going to urge lawmakers to pay for new road projects by cutting other parts of government. They're going to urge tax hikes. And thanks to South Carolina's long legislative session, they had plenty of time to do it. In the end, thanks to citizen groups raising the alarm, they weren't successful. That's a rarity, unfortunately, and

tax hike supporters are sure to be back in January.

According to one media account, toward the end of session legislative leaders even tried to prevent the Board of Economic Advisers from publicizing a revenue surplus, presumably on the grounds that a surplus would undermine the argument for a tax hike. That simply couldn't have happened without a lengthy session.

Or take ethics reform. The year began with a few good proposals, but the longer they sat in committees, the longer lawmakers had to water them down or amend them with insidious provisions. A bill to reform the state's Freedom of Information law gained a provision allowing government agencies to take citizens to court for filing "frivolous" FOIA requests. A bill to require elected officials to disclose their sources of income eventually included a provision loosening requirements on disclosing government income. And so on. The longer the session went on, in other words, the more pointless these bills became.

Or consider the debate over the bond bill. House lawmakers introduced a bill to issue bond debt and use the money for a variety of largely unnecessary projects connected to state colleges and universities. It would have been difficult for lawmakers to pass such a controversial bill within the confines of a short session. As it was, though, they were able to introduce the bill; then take it off the floor when the Policy Council and (separately) Gov. Haley raised objections; then find ways to pay for the new projects

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In short: our excessively long session gave the State House complex – lawmakers, lobbyists, consultants, various special interests – plenty of time to weaken reform, make tax hikes more likely, and spend every last available dime of revenue.

What should a session-shortening bill look like? A sensible reform would be to mandate an end to sessions by the second Friday in April, making each one last roughly 90 calendar days, and holding session every two years. This would encourage lawmakers to use their time – and our money – more wisely.

Members of the House argue that they pass a bill every session to shorten session but Senate ignores it. That may be technically true, but this year, anyway, the bill they passed was anemically weak. The House of Representatives passed a bill that cut a mere ten days off session. The Senate's bill would have shortened session by three months. It wasn't passed, but at least it was worthy of passing.

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Journal-Scene
Summerville, SC
Circ. 5929
From Page:
B1
11/11/2015
64234



Goose Creek
Gazette
Goose
Creek, SC
Circ. 13000
From Page:
5
11/12/2015
64132



32 + 148 + 1

GUEST EDITORIAL

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Goose Creek
Gazette
Goose
Creek, SC
Circ. 13000
From Page:
1
11/12/2015
64132



148
**Berkeley
Co. says no
to refugees
seeking to
resettle in U.S.**

BY LINDSAY STREET
The Gazette

Berkeley County has closed its doors to those seeking asylum in the United States from war-torn regions — or at the very least vocally opposed any refugees resettling in the county — via a resolution unanimously passed during council's special meeting Monday in Moncks Corner.

The resolution targets Syrian and Middle East refugees, listing concerns of terrorism and national security.

"The County of Berkeley will not approve the Refugee Resettlement Project and will not approve the relocation of refugees from the Middle East

region within the borders of Berkeley County," the resolution reads. The wording then hedges, adding "to the extend that it is permitted to do so."

The resolution also calls upon lawmakers to cease placement of refugees in the state.

Councilman Caldwell Pinckney opened the discussion during the Justice and Public Safety Committee.

"Just to make this as clear as possible with everyone sitting in the audience, can we get some real elementary clarification as to why we're in opposition of it?"

Councilman Tommy Newell, who read the resolution, responded:

"Not sure the federal government can screen all the refugees coming over and make sure they're not a part of a terrorist group, and I can't take the chance of my 8-year-old getting attacked in her school."

The fear stems from the United States government's September pledge to take in 10,000 of the estimated four million Syrian refugees over the next year. Some have expressed concern that radicalized Muslims seeking to harm Americans could be among the refugees.

Committee Chair Ken Gunn called upon citizen Bob Hunter from the audience to explain which public bodies have passed similar resolutions in the state. Hunter said he was "not aware" of any other counties or municipalities passing a similar resolution in the state, but that the Charleston and Dorchester Republican parties have both passed similar resolutions that call on the state to cease accepting Syrian and Middle East refugees.

Last week, a similar resolution was proposed in York County and failed. It was one of the first reported attempts of a county trying to pass such a measure.

It failed when fellow council members did not give a second to the motion, according to an article in The Herald newspaper.

In September, South Carolina made a New York Times headline for a meeting in the Upstate that vocally opposed refugees from Syria. South Carolina residents told the reporter they worried about the lack of assimilation into American culture and feared Islam did not cohere to the "Judeo-Christian

See **REFUGEES**, Page **4A**





Goose Creek
 Gazette
 Goose
 Creek, SC
 Circ. 13000
 From Page:
 4
 11/12/2015
 64132



Refugees

from page 1A

values” of the United States.

According to the latest State Department numbers, a total of 15 refugees entered South Carolina in October. World Relief is the nonprofit contractor that helps with the resettlement efforts in South Carolina. None of those refugees hailed from Syria. Eight came from Iraq, five from Ukraine, one from Eritrea (bordering Sudan and the Red Sea

on the Horn of Africa) and one from Democratic Republic of Congo. In comparison, the Palmetto state’s neighbors, North Carolina and Georgia, accepted 146 refugees and 271 refugees, respectively. They had 13 Syrian refugees between them during the month of October.

As of Oct. 31, 1,682 refugees from Syria have entered the United States since Jan. 1. In 2014, only 104 Syrians migrated to the United States as refugees. The most refugees (12,676) from the Near East/South Asia region came from Iraq.

In April, Gov. Nikki Haley penned a response to rising concerns about radicalized Syrian refugees expressed by the Spartanburg County legislative delegation. In the letter, Haley said that South Carolina was one of 48 states to accept refugees under the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program since 1975.

She wrote that refugees admitted into the United States are “screened and vetted by the Department of Homeland Security, and are supported upon their arrival by local families and nonprofit organizations to ensure

their success and integration.” She added that state agencies do not make decisions on selection of individuals or timing of their relocation. She continued that while she was concerned about lax screenings, she would seek greater transparency from Homeland Security.

“Just as we cannot allow fear to erode America’s place in the world as accepting of immigrants who chose to come legally and contribute as citizens, nor can we allow ineffective federal bureaucracies to put our citizens at risk,” she wrote.



32 + 148 + 1 Why S.C.'s legislative session should be much, much shorter

Progressive Journal
Pageland, SC
Circ. 4126
From Page: 4
11/10/2015
64114

Why S.C.'s Legislative Session Should Be Much, Much Shorter

By CECILIA BROWN
Guest editorial

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Progressive
Journal
Pageland, SC
Circ. 4126
From Page:
4
11/10/2015
64114

Progressive
Journal
Pageland, SC
Circ. 4126
From Page:
1
11/10/2015
64114

148

SENATORIAL VISIT



photos by KIMBERLY HARRINGTON/Progressive Journal editor

Above, Sen. Tim Scott speaks to a group of Conbraco Industries employees on Friday, Nov. 6. Below, Scott, right, speaks with Pageland councilmen Jimmie Baker, left, and Harold Hutto.

Sen. Scott visits Conbraco Industries

By KIMBERLY HARRINGTON

Progressive Journal editor

For the second consecutive year, the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW) is cutting the Unemployment Insurance (UI) tax rate, saving South Carolina businesses more than \$151 million.

The 2016 tax rate represents an average reduction of 17.1 percent over last year's rate, saving businesses more than \$69 million.

Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) was in Pageland on Friday to help celebrate this milestone with S.C. Rep. Richie Yow of District 53 (Chesterfield and Lancaster counties).

Scott spoke with a group of employees and community members at Conbraco Industries' plant one on Pearl Street and took questions from the audience.

See SCOTT | Page 2A



Scott

continued from the front

"I have worked with the business community and helped facilitate the workforce development training with partners here in South Carolina," Yow said. "I have worked hard to help create jobs. I am grateful to the teachers who educate our children helping provide the skill and education that is needed for the workers to fill these positions."

"I am grateful to have U.S. Senator Tim Scott as my guest in District 53 today to take part with local industry and to help celebrate this milestone," Yow said.

Rate reductions are a direct result of the state's economy improving; businesses employing more than 2 million South Carolinians; DEW dramatically lowering benefit payouts, and legislative and DEW policy changes to restrict benefits to individuals who lost their job through no fault of their own, according to a release provided by Yow.

In June, DEW announced that it had paid

off a nearly \$1 billion federal loan used to pay state unemployment insurance benefits during the Great Recession.

Early and voluntary payments on the loan by DEW between 2011 and 2015 led to returning the Trust Fund to solvency, saving businesses more than \$12 million in interest payments.

With more South Carolinians working than any time in our state's history, with an improving economy, and with the federal loan paid off, DEW is able to reduce the tax burden on businesses while rebuilding the Trust Fund to a level that will sustain a recession.

In taking questions, Scott said although the nation has a \$4 trillion budget, it only spent \$1 trillion last year. The rest is for automatic increases, he said.

When asked about common core education, Scott said it is not as active as it used to be. It is "going down quickly. Many states like South Carolina are saying 'no' to common core."

Pageland Town Councilman Harold Hutto asked why politicians are determining the best education-

al programs rather than educators?

Scott said he prefers that educators make the decisions.

"We have a top-heavy system and we need to reverse that," he said.

Parents also play a vital role. The more empowered the parent, the more successful the school system, Scott said.

More on Scott

Scott is a junior U.S. Senator for South Carolina. A Republican, he was appointed as senator in 2013 after South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley named him to fill the U.S. Senate seat vacated by Jim DeMint.

Prior to being sworn in to the Senate, Senator Scott served in the United States House of Representatives from 2011-2013, where he was a member of House leadership and sat on the influential House Rules Committee.

He also served on Charleston County Council for 13 years, including four terms as chair and in the South Carolina House of Representatives for two years, where he was elected chairman of the Freshman Caucus and House Whip.

Progressive
Journal
Pageland, SC
Circ. 4126
From Page:
2
11/10/2015
64114



Lancaster News
Lancaster, SC
Circ. 12696
From Page:
12
11/9/2015
62165



148

Alma Pate celebrates 100 years



PHOTO SUPPLIED

Alma Pate celebrated her 100th birthday on Oct. 24 at Glenwood Heights Baptist Church with family and friends. Lancaster County issued a proclamation and presented Pate with a plaque declaring Oct. 24 Alma Ida Pate Day. She received more than 70 cards and letters, some from distinguished senders such as the Rev. Billy Graham, President Barak Obama and First Lady Michelle, U.S. Rep. Mick Mulvaney, U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, Gov. Nikki Haley and S.C. Rep. Mandy Powers-Norrell, who presented Pate with a special gift.

1

148 Palmetto Engineering investing \$1.2 million in expansion in Piedmont

Palmetto Engineering, a firm that specializes in telecommunications engineering, industrial electrical engineering and GIS telecommunications software, is expanding its Upstate operations with the establishment of a new facility in Anderson County. The company is investing \$1.2 million in the project, creating 25 new jobs in Piedmont, over the next five years.

Established in 2006 and headquartered in Greenville, S.C., Palmetto Engineering provides solutions for moderate to complex electrical and telecommunications projects. A rapidly growing firm since its inception, the company now employs more than 160 workers across Arkansas, North Carolina and South Carolina.

In an effort to meet increased customer demand, Palmetto Engineering is expanding its Upstate operations by purchasing an existing 20,000-square-foot facility, located at 3017 Highway 153 in Piedmont, S.C. Expected to be fully operational in the 4th quarter of 2016, hiring for the new positions has already begun. Those interested in joining the Palmetto Engineering team should visit the company's careers page online.

Palmetto Engineering President and Chief Executive George Wyatt said, "Palmetto Engineering has its roots in Anderson County and we are excited to continue our investment here. We look forward to a bright future and to making a difference in our own community."

"Founded nearly a decade ago in the Upstate, Palmetto Engineering's decision to invest \$1.2 million and create 25 new jobs in Anderson County is a real reason to celebrate and a testament to the

pro-business environment we have worked so hard to create in all parts of our state." –Gov. Nikki Haley

"We're always excited to celebrate additional investment in our state and its people, but it's truly inspiring when that investment comes from one of our existing firms. I congratulate Palmetto Engineering on all of their success in South Carolina and around the Southeast, and look forward to watching them thrive here for many years to come." –Secretary of Commerce Bob-

by Hitt

"It is extremely satisfying to see Palmetto Engineering, one of our longtime local industries, prosper and need to grow beyond their current facilities. Their \$1.2 million investment and the addition of 25 jobs with above average wages, demonstrates their strong commitment to our community. Additionally, this expansion will transform an existing, vacant building in district six into a thriving business." –Anderson County Councilman Ken Waters

Journal
Williamston, SC
Circ. 3764
From Page:
5
11/11/2015
61249





Staying out front in development ongoing mission

“South Carolina continues to lead the nation’s manufacturing renaissance,” S.C. Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt said in Tuesday’s announcement on an industry expansion in Williston.

Hitt and Gov. Nikki Haley speak regularly about South Carolina’s manufacturing sector thriving since they took office. They cite 28,000 new manufacturing jobs over the past four years, more than created in Georgia and North Carolina.

During Haley’s tenure as governor, South Carolina has become the top state for exporting tire and passenger vehicles. The list of top companies locating or planning to locate in the state since she took office in 2011 is impressive: Continental Tire plant in Sumter County, Giti tire in Chester County, the Daimler van plant expansion in North Charleston and Volvo in Berkeley County.

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— The (Orangeburg) Times

Gaffney Ledger
Gaffney, SC
Circ. 8218
From Page:
4
11/9/2015
61126

