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Subject: Afternoon Clips – Tuesday, December 20, 2016

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## Afternoon Clips – Tuesday, December 20, 2016

General Assembly News:

**Associated Press:** Thursday bond hearing for former state House majority leader

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=e882ljfz](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=e882ljfz)

SC State Wire

A former South Carolina House majority leader will be in court this week to face misdemeanor corruption charges. Prosecutor David Pascoe announced Tuesday that a bond hearing for GOP Rep. Jim Merrill of Charleston is set for Thursday morning in Columbia. Merrill was indicted last week on two counts of misconduct in office and 28 counts of ethics violations. They marked Pascoe's first Statehouse indictments since former Speaker Bobby Harrell pleaded guilty and resigned in 2014. Merrill is accused of illegally profiting from his position. The indictments allege his public relations and political consulting firm collected more than \$1 million between 2002 and 2016 from clients who hired him because of his office. Merrill adamantly denies doing anything illegal. His attorneys note he's been in public relations for two decades.

**The State:** Bond hearing set for indicted SC lawmaker <http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article121969974.html>

Bristow Marchant

The S.C. legislator indicted last week on charges he misused his public office and improperly accepted millions in payments from interest groups will appear in bond court on Thursday. Suspended Rep. Jim Merrill, R-Berkeley, faces a 30-count indictment in a special prosecutor probe into corruption in the State House. He will appear in the Richland County Courthouse at 11 a.m. Thursday for a formal bond hearing. Merrill is a former Republican majority leader in the S.C. House of Representatives and prominent GOP leader. His indictment follows a lengthy and often contentious investigation by Solicitor David Pascoe, who reiterated in announcing the hearing that Merrill is "presumed innocent until proven guilty." Merrill is accused of illegally using his office to pocket at least \$1.3 million, either directly or through his business, Geechie Communications. He also failed to disclose receiving payments of more \$673,000 from trade, advocacy and political groups in violation of state ethics law, according to the indictments. Merrill was suspended from his House seat by Speaker Jay Lucas after his indictment on Dec. 14.

**Post and Courier:** Bond hearing set Thursday for Rep. Jim Merrill

[http://www.postandcourier.com/politics/bond-hearing-set-for-rep-jim-merrill/article\\_b4c76b94-c6d9-11e6-9b18-ffa14fe25.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/politics/bond-hearing-set-for-rep-jim-merrill/article_b4c76b94-c6d9-11e6-9b18-ffa14fe25.html)

Gavin Jackson

A bond hearing for suspended state Rep. Jim Merrill, R-Charleston, is set for Thursday morning at the Richland County Courthouse in what will be his first court appearance since he was hit with corruption charges last week. Merrill was indicted Wednesday on two counts of misconduct in office and 28 counts for violations of the state's Ethics Act. The hearing is in front of Circuit Judge Knox McMahon in downtown Columbia. Indictments handed down by the Richland County Grand Jury allege a long stream of wrongdoing spanning much of Merrill's 15-year tenure as a state representative, including his time as majority leader. The indictments allege Merrill, who lives on of Daniel Island, used his office and his consulting firm Geechie Communications to garner more than \$1 million from trade groups and companies since 2002. He is accused of failing to report money he

received from companies and groups that lobby legislators, using his office for financial gain, failing to file reports of campaign-related spending from the House Republican Caucus, and overcharging for his work.

**Post and Courier:** Bill filed to prevent lavish spending by MUSC Board of Trustees members

[http://www.postandcourier.com/news/bill-filed-to-prevent-lavish-spending-by-musc-board-of/article\\_7d1b77c8-c61e-11e6-9009-cf67c03ac840.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/news/bill-filed-to-prevent-lavish-spending-by-musc-board-of/article_7d1b77c8-c61e-11e6-9009-cf67c03ac840.html)

Doug Pardue and Lauren Sausser

A bill to prevent the kind of lavish spending on ritzy hotels, gourmet meals and top-shelf liquor that board members of the Medical University of South Carolina have enjoyed for years has been pre-filed in the state Legislature. MUSC Board of Trustees members spent almost \$600,000 between 2011 and early 2016 when they traveled to Charleston for meetings. Their spending patterns were revealed in August after an investigation by The Post and Courier. Their bills included \$160 bottles of premier Italian wine and a \$6,472 dinner at Peninsula Grill to bid farewell to two outgoing board members and staff. The newspaper investigation prompted a swift request from the Commission on Higher Education for a State Inspector's investigation of possible waste, abuse, mismanagement or misconduct by the trustees and MUSC. Inspector General Patrick Maley is also investigating board spending at the University of South Carolina and Clemson University. His investigation is ongoing.

**NOTE:** The newspaper's report prompted Gov. Nikki Haley to call on the trustees to reimburse their share of expenses. MUSC Board of Trustees Chairman Donald Johnson ordered an additional review of the spending. The board was scheduled to consider spending policy changes at its October meeting but delayed that until the Inspector General's Office completes its investigation.

**Post and Courier:** Vincent Sheheen calls own Democratic Party leaders 'sissies'

[http://www.postandcourier.com/politics/vincent-sheheen-calls-own-democratic-party-leaders-sissies/article\\_2ef7983e-c6c7-11e6-b354-c7475862f330.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/politics/vincent-sheheen-calls-own-democratic-party-leaders-sissies/article_2ef7983e-c6c7-11e6-b354-c7475862f330.html)

Maya T. Prabhu

State Sen. Vincent Sheheen, who twice ran as the Democratic candidate for governor, said the leaders of his own party were "sissies" and too focused on "political correctness" as he speculated on social media about a possible run for Congress. Sheheen, D-Camden, on Monday took aim at both national parties, saying Republican leaders were "elitist billionaires" as he went on to call both Democrats and the GOP out of touch. "National Democratic Party leaders have lost touch with the people who live in my district," Sheheen said on his Facebook page. "They act like a bunch of sissies who are all tied up in the latest debate about political correctness instead of focusing on how to help put bread on the tables of the people in my community." House Minority Leader Todd Rutherford, D-Columbia, said he "absolutely" agreed with Sheheen's frustrations with the Democratic Party. He points to Democrats' unwillingness to hit back when attacked by Republicans as the party's downfall during the November election.

## North Carolina News:

**Charlotte Observer:** Gov. Pat McCrory calls for special legislative session Wednesday to repeal HB2

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article121729973.html>

Jim Morrill and Steve Harrison

Following a surprise move by Charlotte City Council on Monday, Republican Gov. Pat McCrory has called for a special session Wednesday to consider repeal of House Bill 2. The governor's statement came in a series of rapidly unfolding events that could signal an end to the nine-month drama that has catapulted North Carolina into national headlines. HB2, seen by critics as an anti-LGBT measure, prompted boycotts and cost the state millions of dollars as well as lost jobs. Monday's events also underscored the continuing tensions between Republican lawmakers and Democratic Gov.-elect Roy Cooper. McCrory's call came hours after Charlotte City Council voted 10-0, with the support of Cooper and Democratic Mayor Jennifer Roberts, to rescind the LGBT ordinance that prompted HB2. "This

sudden reversal, with little notice after the gubernatorial election has ended, sadly proves this entire issue, originated by the political left, was all about politics at the expense of Charlotte and the entire state of North Carolina," McCrory said in a video statement. Cooper, who lobbied for the council action, announced earlier that GOP legislative leaders had promised to repeal HB2.

## SC Political News:

**Associated Press:** Obama expected to bar drilling in swaths of Atlantic, Arctic

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=0pmisgqD](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=0pmisgqD)

Kevin Freking

President Barack Obama is expected to order wide swaths of the Atlantic and Arctic oceans placed permanently off-limits for oil drilling, people briefed on the administration's plan said, in an 11th-hour push for environmental protection before he leaves office. Obama was planning to announce the move on Tuesday, said the individuals, who requested anonymity to discuss the decision before the announcement. The White House declined to comment. The move helps put some finishing touches on Obama's environmental legacy while also testing President-elect Donald Trump's promise to unleash the nation's untapped oil and natural gas reserves. Environmental groups were hoping the ban, despite relying on executive powers, will be difficult for a future president to reverse. Obama is expected to use an arcane provision in a 1953 law to ban offshore leases in the waters permanently. The statute says that "the president of the United States may, from time to time, withdraw from disposition any of the unleased lands of the outer Continental Shelf."

**NOTE:** Along the Atlantic seaboard, states have had mixed reactions to the possibility of drilling. In Florida, the administration of Gov. Rick Scott, a Trump supporter, has raised concerns about the possible effects to the state's beaches and fishing industry, and residents in North Carolina's Outer Banks protested a move toward ocean drilling. But officials in South Carolina and Virginia have expressed support for the economic benefit of new oil jobs.

## Opinion/Editorial:

**Washington Post:** Trump's OMB pick seems poised to ignite a worldwide financial crisis

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-omb-pick-seems-poised-to-ignite-a-worldwide-financial-crisis/2016/12/19/6d3190c8-c631-11e6-85b5-76616a33048d\\_story.html?](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-omb-pick-seems-poised-to-ignite-a-worldwide-financial-crisis/2016/12/19/6d3190c8-c631-11e6-85b5-76616a33048d_story.html?utm_term=.075224e1718c)

[utm\\_term=.075224e1718c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-omb-pick-seems-poised-to-ignite-a-worldwide-financial-crisis/2016/12/19/6d3190c8-c631-11e6-85b5-76616a33048d_story.html?utm_term=.075224e1718c)

Catherine Rampell

It's not the sexiest White House job. But it might soon be among the most dangerous. Over the weekend, President-elect Donald Trump tapped Rep. Mick Mulvaney (R-S.C.) to be his director of the Office of Management and Budget. This Cabinet-level post is responsible for producing the federal budget, overseeing and evaluating executive branch agencies and otherwise advising the president on fiscal matters. It's a position with tremendous, far-reaching power, even if the public doesn't pay much attention to it. Which is why it's so concerning that Trump chose Mulvaney, who seems poised to help Trump ignite another worldwide financial crisis. Mulvaney was first elected to Congress in 2010 as part of the anti-government, tea party wave. A founding member of the right-wing House Freedom Caucus, he is among Congress's most committed fiscal hawks. He has repeatedly voted against his own party's budget proposals because they were insufficiently conservative. All this will presumably put him at odds with Trump's plans to balloon federal deficits through a \$7 trillion cut in individual and corporate income taxes, another half-trillion in infrastructure subsidies and other major spending expansions.

## South Carolina News:

**Post and Courier:** S.C. was among fastest-growing states in U.S. during past year

[http://www.postandcourier.com/news/s-c-was-among-fastest-growing-states-in-u-s/article\\_71a479fc-c6ce-11e6-a489-ab0ccb86424f.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/news/s-c-was-among-fastest-growing-states-in-u-s/article_71a479fc-c6ce-11e6-a489-ab0ccb86424f.html)

David Slade

South Carolina's population was the 10th-fastest growing in the nation over the past year and will likely top 5 million in 2017, statistics released by the Census Bureau show. Having eclipsed Alabama's population last year, South Carolina is now closing in on Minnesota, the 22nd-largest state. During the 12 months ending July 1, the Palmetto State gained 66,285 residents. More than two-thirds of the growth was due to people moving in from other states. Only six states gained more population from domestic migration — the difference between the numbers of people moving in from other states and moving out to other parts of the nation. For South Carolina, that's a continuation of a long-running growth trend. Much of the state's growth has been concentrated along the coast, and nearly all has been in urban and suburban areas. Last year, census data showed that the three most rapidly growing metropolitan areas on the U.S. Atlantic Coast were all in the Palmetto State — for the third year in a row. Those areas were the multi-county Myrtle Beach, Hilton Head and Charleston metro areas. And within the Charleston metro area, the town of Mount Pleasant was the fastest-growing city east of the Mississippi River in 2015, among those with at least 50,000 residents

**Greenville News:** SC public health preparedness improves, new report shows

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/health/2016/12/20/sc-public-health-preparedness-improves-new-report-shows/95614942/>

Liv Osby

South Carolina scored a seven out of 10 in a new report on public health preparedness, improving one point since the last time the report was issued. Produced by the Trust for America's Health, the report, called "Ready or Not?" gauged state preparedness based on 10 key indicators such as public health funding, food safety and emergency health care access. Released on Tuesday, it concluded that the U.S. is often caught off-guard by emerging threats like Zika, Ebola and bioterrorism. As a result, resources must be diverted from other priorities, leaving the country vulnerable. "Health emergencies can quickly disrupt, derail and divert resources from other ongoing priorities and efforts from across the government," said Rich Hamburg, interim CEO of TFAH, a non-profit, non-partisan group that works to protect the health of every community and make disease prevention a national priority.

**Post and Courier:** Gasoline costs to take bigger chomp of wallets next year

[http://www.postandcourier.com/business/gasoline-costs-to-take-bigger-chomp-of-wallets-next-year/article\\_29c58700-c5f9-11e6-8862-cf674f9cd6de.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/business/gasoline-costs-to-take-bigger-chomp-of-wallets-next-year/article_29c58700-c5f9-11e6-8862-cf674f9cd6de.html)

Warren L. Wise

The average motorist can expect to pay up to \$180 more for gasoline next year as rising prices bite deeper into pocketbooks. That's the assessment by gas price service GasBuddy, which also found holiday travelers across South Carolina and the nation will spend 25 cents more per gallon this Christmas over last year. Prices have climbed steadily following a decision last month by oil-exporting countries to trim production to boost sagging world prices. The average price of gas in South Carolina is about \$2.02 a gallon, holding steady at last week's rate, according to GasBuddy. Motor club AAA puts the price a penny higher. Nationally, the price jumped 3.1 cents per gallon during the past week to an average of \$2.24, according to both gas price services. "When the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries announced production cuts Nov. 30, we knew we were likely to see gasoline prices rise almost immediately," said Patrick DeHaan, senior petroleum analyst at GasBuddy. "There's never a good time to see gas prices rise, but ahead of the holidays just seems like the worst. ... At a time of year Americans are busy opening their wallets to shop for gifts, they'll have to dig deeper to fill their tanks, too."

Local News:

**Associated Press:** Teen files rape suit against Charleston college, fraternity

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=Q1kfQKHv](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=Q1kfQKHv)

SC State Wire



A former College of Charleston student is suing the school and a fraternity, saying she was drugged and raped at a party when she was a 17-year-old freshman. The woman went to a party in August hosted by Alpha Epsilon Pi's Chi Omicron chapter when two of the fraternity's brothers forced her into a bedroom, according to the lawsuit. The men locked the door, took off her clothes and forced her to take illegal drugs. The lawsuit says one man made her perform a sex act while the other was video recording, according to the lawsuit obtained by The Post and Courier of Charleston (<http://bit.ly/2hDpXps>). The men became annoyed when the student kept resisting and left her alone on the floor, naked and crying, according to the lawsuit, which said she had to be hospitalized and receive other treatment for her injuries. Attorney Nathan Hughey said the teen decided to sue because the fraternity and the college created an environment where this kind of assault could happen. He said she was so traumatized she dropped out of school and went back to her home in another state.

**Sun News:** Federal lawsuit filed against Horry County Police Department

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/local/crime/article121957783.html>

Emily Weaver and Audrey Hudson

All four lawsuits against the Horry County Police Department alleging that a former detective sexually assaulted, harassed, and violated the civil rights of several women will be heard in federal court as the last of the Jane Doe victims has refiled her original charges in U.S. District Court. The first victim known as Jane Doe 1, who claimed she was sexually abused by former Detective Allen Large, transferred her claim to federal court on Thursday with the additional claims that her constitutional and civil rights had been violated. All four women who have filed suit against the department are demanding monetary relief for damages they allege the department allowed to occur. The Sun News reported that Large confessed during a March deposition to encouraging women to participate in nude catfight videos, but he has denied sexually harassing or assaulting any of the women. Jane Doe 1 says that she contacted the Horry County Police Department via 911 to report a sexual assault by a known assailant on Dec. 23, 2013. The federal lawsuit claims that two officers responded to the scene and no arrests were made in the case.

**Associated Press:** Jamaican workers to split \$2M under settlement with resort

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=1fxvkaVR](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=1fxvkaVR)

Meg Kinnard

About 240 Jamaican workers at a luxury golf resort in South Carolina will be splitting \$2 million under a deal to settle a lawsuit alleging they had been cheated. The order signed Dec. 16 by U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel applies to a pool of Jamaican guest workers who worked for Kiawah Island Golf Resort on H-2B visas. The program allows U.S. employers to bring foreign nationals to the country to fill temporary nonagricultural jobs. Several guest workers filed a class-action lawsuit last year accusing Kiawah of failing to properly pay them minimum wages by deducting housing and transportation costs from their pay for kitchen, serving and housekeeping jobs from 2012 through 2014. Those deductions, the lawsuit argued, weren't put in writing when the employees were hired for jobs at the resort island property, located about 25 miles southwest of downtown Charleston. Kiawah was the site of the 2012 PGA Championship and will be the site of the 2021 championship.

**Post and Courier:** Judge approves Kiawah Golf Resort settlement over worker wages

[http://www.postandcourier.com/business/judge-approves-kiawah-golf-resort-settlement-over-worker-wages/article\\_878c0276-c6c9-11e6-ba0c-e37df82fc238.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/business/judge-approves-kiawah-golf-resort-settlement-over-worker-wages/article_878c0276-c6c9-11e6-ba0c-e37df82fc238.html)

Dave Munday

A federal judge has approved a \$2.3 million settlement to a lawsuit claiming Kiawah Island Golf Resort underpaid Jamaican guest workers. The Southern Poverty Law Center filed the suit on behalf of the workers in March 2015. Both sides agreed to the settlement in June. Judge Richard Gergel signed it Friday. "When workers use our nation's guest worker program, they expect that a very basic promise will be upheld: They will be paid the wages they earn," Jim Knoepp, senior attorney for the center, said in a statement Tuesday. The suit was filed on behalf of 240 workers who were brought to the resort from Jamaica on H-2B guest worker visas to work as housekeepers, servers and other

similar positions from 2012 through 2014. The suit alleged that they were improperly charged hundreds of dollars in recruitment fees and forced to pay excessive housing and transportation costs that pushed their wages below the required minimum. The federal government requires employers to pay guest workers a "prevailing wage" that will not have an adverse impact on U.S. workers. The resort also failed to increase their wages during the 2013 season as required by the Department of Labor.

**Post and Courier:** Chinese fiber business setting up shop in South Carolina

[http://www.postandcourier.com/business/chinese-fiber-business-setting-up-shop-in-south-carolina/article\\_90df4efa-c6c9-11e6-b03b-3f371f35fbce.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/business/chinese-fiber-business-setting-up-shop-in-south-carolina/article_90df4efa-c6c9-11e6-b03b-3f371f35fbce.html)

John McDermott

Labon expects to create 23 jobs, with hiring starting immediately, the state Commerce Department said Tuesday. The company recently purchased a 15,700-square-foot building on Industrial Boulevard in Orangeburg and projects it will be operational by January. Labon was formed in 2005 in Shanghai, on China's central coast. It develops and manufactures fibers and textiles for use across numerous applications, including sealing, friction, hand protection and flame-retardant products. "This development will allow us not only to accommodate our continued business growth but better serve our customers as well," Hongxin Chen, a general manager at Labon, said in a prepared statement. The State Ports Authority said it looks forward to serving the company's cargo needs from the Port of Charleston. The S.C. Coordinating Council for Economic Development has approved tax credits Labon can claim if it meets its employment goals.

**WLTX:** Textile Company to Bring 23 Jobs to Orangeburg County

<http://www.wltx.com/news/local/textile-company-to-bring-23-jobs-to-orangeburg-county/375314184>

A technical fiber and textile manufacturer is coming to South Carolina, a move that's expected to create 23 jobs and over \$3.1 million in investment. Labon plans to launch its first U.S. facility at a site at 122 Industrial Boulevard in Orangeburg. They'll be using a 15,700 square foot facility on that property. Labon specializes in research, development, and manufacturing of products that include hand protection and flame-retardant materials.

**President-elect Trump News:**

**Associated Press:** Trump hosts candidates for key Veterans Affairs post

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/74d9293547db41e986182d293eafe4dd>

President-elect Donald Trump met Tuesday with candidates for his unfilled Cabinet positions, including prospective hires to run the Department of Veterans Affairs, a beleaguered agency that the Republican businessman has vowed to overhaul. Vice President-elect Mike Pence met with members of his incoming national security team a day after acts of violence rocked the world. At Mar-a-Lago, Trump's palatial Florida estate, was slated to meet with Luis Quinonez, who runs a company with military and health care ties and is said to be under consideration for VA secretary. He also is set to meet with Toby Cosgrove, the CEO of the Cleveland Clinic, who was a top contender to replace Eric Shinseki when he resigned at the VA in 2014. Cosgrove later withdrew from consideration. Trump repeatedly pledged during the campaign to fix the woes at the department and said he would "take care of great veterans." But he also came under scrutiny for being slow in paying out money raised for veterans groups and for suggesting that "strong" veterans don't need treatment for mental health problems.

**Associated Press:** 1980s voting-fraud case likely topic at Sessions' hearing

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/801f91fab295473aae478242b76c7d83/1980s-voting-fraud-case-likely-topic-sessions-hearing>

A failed voting-fraud prosecution from more than 30 years ago is likely to re-emerge as a contentious issue during Sen. Jeff Sessions' confirmation hearing for attorney general. Sessions was dogged by his handling of the case as U.S. attorney during his 1986 confirmation hearing for a federal judgeship,

when he tried to fend off complaints of a wrongful prosecution. He devoted more space to that case than any other in a questionnaire he submitted this month to the Senate Judiciary Committee for the attorney general post, suggesting the matter is likely to come up again during his Jan. 10-11 confirmation hearing before the panel. The 1985 prosecution involved three black civil rights activists, including a former adviser to Martin Luther King Jr., who were accused of illegally tampering with large numbers of absentee ballots in rural Perry County, Alabama. The defendants argued that they were assisting voters who were poor, uneducated and in many cases illiterate, and marked the ballots with the voters' permission. A jury acquitted the three after just a few hours of deliberation. Sessions since then has defended the decision to bring the case and suggested in his questionnaire that there was ample evidence for a conviction.

**Associated Press:** S. Florida county wants reimbursement for protecting Trump

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/5063f213fcfe4d47bff939840b8522f0/s-florida-county-wants-reimbursement-protecting-trump>

A South Florida county wants to be reimbursed for the cost of protecting President-elect Donald Trump at his Palm Beach oceanfront estate. The Palm Beach Post reports (<http://bit.ly/2ho52UH>) that the county is sending a letter to Congressional members asking for help in getting reimbursed for resources devoted to securing Mar-a-Lago, Trump's Palm Beach mansion. County Administrator Verdenia Baker said when Trump visited in Thanksgiving, it cost an estimated \$250,000. The president-elect is spending Christmas in Palm Beach. Officials say they anticipate it will be a significant fiscal impact over the next four years and feels the federal government should reimburse the county's taxpayers for the cost.

National News:

**Associated Press:** Court unseals search warrant for Hillary Clinton's emails

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/adcc29e4c84645c8823e07b4e829f371>

The FBI told a federal court it needed a search warrant to look at thousands of Hillary Clinton's emails on the laptop of former U.S. Rep. Anthony Weiner because they had the potential to cause "grave damage to national security" if disclosed, according to court documents made public Tuesday. The wording was contained in a redacted search warrant and other court papers that were previously under seal in the investigation of an online relationship between Weiner, the estranged husband of top Clinton aide Huma Abedin, and a teenage girl in North Carolina. The papers offered no new revelations about Clinton's emails or the scope of a case that factored into the presidential election. A sworn statement dated Oct. 30 from an FBI agent whose name was blacked out cited a previous inquiry into Clinton's personal computer server that found 22 emails classified "Top Secret." The classification "is significant because it means that the unauthorized disclosure of those emails could result in exceptionally grave damage to national security," the agent wrote. In the Weiner probe, the FBI discovered header information on emails pointing to correspondence to and from Clinton, the papers say. Given the findings of the earlier probe, "there is also probable cause to believe that the correspondence ... contains classified information which was produced by and is owned by the U.S. government," they say.

**Associated Press:** Georgia leads nation in number of executions as Texas slows

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/a612377546404da098d852849a800b10>

Georgia led the nation this year in the number of inmates put to death, an anomaly that's due at least in part to executions in Texas dipping into single digits for the first time in 20 years. With nine lethal injections in 2016, Georgia accounted for nearly half of the 20 executions nationwide. It was the most inmates the state has put to death in a calendar year since the U.S. Supreme Court allowed executions to resume 40 years ago. It was almost twice as many as the state's previous record of five, set in 1987 and matched last year. Texas, meanwhile, executed seven inmates, the fewest the state has put to death since 1996, when three people were executed. Alabama had two executions,

and Florida and Missouri had one apiece. Executions and new death sentences have been on the decline in recent years for a variety of reasons, and that continued in 2016. Even as Georgia carried out 14 executions in 2015 and 2016, no new death sentences were imposed in the state. Texas sent four people to death row in 2016 and two in 2015.

## United Nations News:

**Associated Press:** UN warns of rapid Palestinian population growth

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0b9fbb989fc2411495afd811da4ac6d0/un-warns-rapid-palestinian-population-growth>

A new U.N. study projecting rapid growth in the Palestinian population should serve as a "wake up call" to Israel and the international community, a senior U.N. official said Tuesday. The report said that without international attention, growth in the Palestinian population, particularly Gaza, will lead to an even greater crisis in unemployment, overwhelm a strained infrastructure and increase the lure of militant groups. "We are on a downward spiral, especially in Gaza, and things are getting worse by the day," said Anders Thomsen, director of the U.N. Population Fund's office in the Palestinian territories. "If that continues, you can of course only imagine that this will be an environment ripe for radicalization and for the conflicts, so I think that should be avoided." The population in the Palestinian territories will double to 9.5 million by 2050, according to the U.N. study. By 2030, the Palestinian territories would need 1 million new jobs just to keep unemployment at the rate it is now, the study found. Unemployment is currently 43 percent in Gaza and 18 percent in West Bank.

## World News:

**Associated Press:** Islamic State claims responsibility for Berlin market attack

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/b1f826e4db504a0ea18fd386b206b287>

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility Tuesday for a truck attack on a crowded Berlin Christmas market that left 12 people dead and nearly 50 injured, as German security forces hunted for the perpetrator after releasing a man from custody for lack of evidence. IS said in a statement from its Amaq news agency that the attacker "in Berlin is a soldier of the Islamic State and carried out the attack in response to calls for targeting citizens of the Crusader coalition." Germany is not involved in anti-IS combat operations, but has Tornado jets and a refueling plane stationed in Turkey in support of the coalition fighting militants in Syria, as well as a frigate protecting a French aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean, among other assets. The claim of responsibility came not long after German prosecutors said they'd released a man picked up on Monday night near the scene of the attack, initially suspected of driving the truck. The man, a Pakistani citizen who came to Germany last year, had been picked up based on a description of a suspect who jumped out of the truck and fled.

**Associated Press:** Berlin attack may make Merkel's re-election quest rougher

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/f2206b73bc7c4bab830498a6151c1361>

Chancellor Angela Merkel already knew that her campaign for a fourth term as Germany's leader will be her most difficult yet. The deadly truck attack on a Christmas market may have made it tougher — and is already polarizing opinion. A nationalist party that has assailed Merkel's acceptance of migrants leapt on events in Berlin well before authorities even concluded that the incident was an attack, with a prominent member proclaiming the 12 victims to be "Merkel's dead." Monday's attack also threatened to rekindle tensions between Merkel and Bavarian conservative allies, who have sniped at her migrant policies and demanded a cap on the number of newcomers that Germany will accept, and whose supporters are an important source of votes. A man arrested after the truck attack Monday night in Berlin and initially treated as a suspect came from Pakistan and registered as an asylum-seeker in Germany last year. Later Tuesday, he was released for lack of evidence tying him to the attack. Merkel said it would be "particularly sickening" if the assailant were confirmed to be an asylum-seeker — both for Germans who help refugees and "for the many people who really need our help and are making an effort to integrate in our country."



**Associated Press:** Turkey and Russia probe slaying of envoy in Ankara gallery

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/21b4575aa4af4bedb90260acc0e02236>

Investigators from Turkey and Russia hunted for clues Tuesday in the assassination of Russia's ambassador to Turkey in front of stunned onlookers at a photo exhibition in Ankara. A team of 18 Russian investigators and foreign ministry officials arrived in Turkey and began inspecting the art gallery where the shooting of Andrei Karlov took place. Central to the joint Turkish-Russian investigation is whether Mevlut Mert Altintas, a member of Ankara's riot police squad, planned the attack alone. One senior Turkish government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to release details to the press, said it was unlikely Altintas acted alone. The official said the killing had all the marks of being "fully professional, not a one-man action." So far, authorities have detained only people close to the gunman in their investigation: Altintas' parents, sister, three other relatives and his roommate in Ankara.

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