

From: Moore, Camlin <CamlinMoore@gov.sc.gov>
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Subject: Morning Clips - Thursday, March 10, 2016

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Governor Nikki Haley News:

WACH: WACH FOX investigation into DJJ has Senate lawmakers calling for action

<http://wach.com/news/local/wach-fox-investigation-into-djj-has-senate-lawmakers-calling-for-action>

Tara Petit

A WACH Fox News investigation into the Department of Juvenile Justice is getting some major attention at the state capitol. A group of lawmakers is demanding its own investigation, pointing to the information that WACH Fox News has uncovered while debating on the senate floor Wednesday. "I am calling for the department and the Governor today to come clean with the general public. This should not be a cover-up," said Lourie.

Note: Wednesday night, Governor Haley responded to the Senator's challenge, saying in a statement to WACH Fox News "We have a team in place that is ready to do whatever it takes - and that includes improved discipline and security measures and staff reorganization and training - to make sure the agency and those who work there are safer and stronger going forward."

Times and Democrat: Time is running out for helping S.C. farmers

http://thetandd.com/news/opinion/article_2c9e28a0-96e8-55b8-8c49-a689250c236d.html

The losses suffered by South Carolina's farmers in 2015 are well documented: Drought and then flooding, with the final result a disaster of major proportions. Last October's torrential rains wiped out \$330 million in S.C. crops at harvest time. Farmers lost an additional \$45 million because they couldn't plant winter crops in bogs, according to the S.C. Department of Agriculture. Counting losses from the spring freeze and summer drought, the total loss is estimated near \$600 million. Debate continues on what if any help farmers will receive. But time is short.

Note: And there is opposition from Gov. Nikki Haley, who contends farmers should not be treated differently than other flood-impacted businesses in South Carolina. She has said crop insurance should suffice, noting she's asked the federal government to expedite insurance claims.

S.C. General Assembly News:

Associated Press: South Carolina on cusp of having tougher abortion law

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=9rdyggix

Seanna Adcox

South Carolina is on the cusp of passing a bill prohibiting nearly all abortions past 19 weeks of pregnancy, making it the latest of 15 states to pass restrictive bans whose constitutionality has yet to be ruled on by the U.S. Supreme Court. A compromise approved Tuesday by the Senate allows exceptions to the ban only if the mother's life is in jeopardy or the fetus can't survive outside the womb. That was crucial for passage in the Senate, where Democrats had blocked the legislation for years.

Note: Delleney, one of the South Carolina Legislature's staunchest abortion foes, expects the GOP-led House to give final approval and send the bill to Gov. Nikki Haley's desk in the coming weeks. The Republican is expected to sign it, though her office has not said whether she will.

The State: SC abortion ban at 20 weeks close to becoming law

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article65035287.html>

Jamie Self

A bill that would ban abortion starting at 20 weeks of pregnancy is close to becoming law. The "Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act" would make abortion illegal at 20 weeks of pregnancy or later – except when the mother's life is at risk or in the case of a severe fetal anomaly that would prevent the child from living after birth. The bill does not include exceptions for rape or incest. It also would penalize doctors who perform abortions illegally. The Republican-controlled S.C. House is expected to give its OK as soon as Thursday to the bill, said Judiciary Committee chairman Greg Delleney, R-Chester, an abortion opponent. Already approved by the Senate, the House's approval will send the bill to Gov. Nikki Haley's desk for her signature.

Associated Press: SC Senate passes \$400M roads bill after year of debate

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=kchor7v

Jeffrey Collins

After nearly a year of debate, the South Carolina Senate passed a bill Wednesday to send an additional \$400 million to state roads without raising the gas tax. But the 30-15 vote isn't the final destination for highway funding. A skeptical House has its own proposal and members worried just taking the money out of the general fund isn't a stable source to repair bridges and repave crumbling interstates. The House will get its crack at the Senate bill after a final vote Thursday. The issue likely will end up in a conference committee of House and Senate members.

Note: Last year, Gov. Nikki Haley stunned the Statehouse by saying she could support increasing South Carolina's gas tax, unchanged for three decades, if there was a corresponding tax cut. This year, she is putting all her support behind the Senate's plan.

The State: SC Senate approves \$400 million roads plan

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article64972757.html>

Andy Shain

The state Senate gave key approval Wednesday to a \$400 million roads-funding plan that does not include an increase in the state's gas tax. After a final perfunctory vote Thursday, the Senate bill heads back to the S.C. House, which passed a different roads-funding bill last year. That bill includes a 10-cent-a-gallon gas-tax increase as well as a small cut in the state income tax. Both bills give the governor control of the S.C. Department of Transportation, now controlled by lawmakers. The House will vote either to negotiate with the Senate over its proposed changes or adopt the Senate plan.

WIS: Senate roads plan receives second reading thumbs up in vote

<http://www.wistv.com/story/31426876/senate-roads-plan-receives-second-reading-thumbs-up-in-vote>

Will Whitson

The South Carolina State Senate voted 30 to 15 in favor on second reading of their version of the roads and infrastructure bill late Wednesday. A third reading is planned for Thursday morning. The passing vote on the much filibustered, little-debated road funding bill took place in the South Carolina Senate before the body adjourned Wednesday afternoon.

The State: Bill would require SLED to investigate all police shootings involving death, serious injury

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article65044317.html>

Glen Luke Flanagan

State senators advanced a bill Wednesday which would require all officer-involved shootings resulting in death or great bodily injury to be investigated by the State Law Enforcement Division. Angie Hammond, mother of Seneca teen Zachary Hammond – who was shot July 26 in an attempted drug bust – urged an amendment to require autopsy results and video footage to be released to family. Her son's shooting made no sense, she said. Legislators decided against the amendment but the bill will move forward.

WSPA: Amendment Rejected to Give Families Police Video & Autopsy Results

<http://wspa.com/2016/03/09/amendment-rejected-to-give-families-police-video-autopsy-results/>

Robert Kittle

A bill to require the State Law Enforcement Division to investigate all police shootings in South Carolina is moving forward, but without a requirement to give victims' families police dashcam video and autopsy results. Angie Hammond, mother of Zachary Hammond, asked senators Wednesday to adopt the amendment, but it was ruled non-germane to the bill, since the bill doesn't mention police videos or autopsy results.

Post and Courier: Mother of S.C. teen killed by police lobbies lawmakers to make shooting videos, autopsy results available to families

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160309/PC1603/160309343>

Maya T. Prabhu

The mother of a Seneca teen shot and killed by police in July walked out of the Statehouse disappointed Wednesday after asking lawmakers to legally require that police release all videos and autopsy reports from an officer-involved shooting to a victim's family. A Senate panel had considered the idea but ruled it was not relevant to a pending bit of legislation on whether outside police agencies should investigate police shootings. Senators instead advanced a bill to the Judiciary Committee that would require the state Law Enforcement Division to investigate all officer-involved shootings that resulted in death or "great bodily harm."

Greenville News: Senators hear mother's story of Seneca police shooting

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/politics/2016/03/09/senators-hear-mothers-story-seneca-police-shooting/81523852/>

Tim Smith

With tears and determination, the mother of a Seneca 19-year-old shot to death by a police officer last summer is asking that lawmakers require the release of video and autopsy results to the family of the person shot. A Senate panel that heard Angie Hammond's story Wednesday declined to include the proposal in a bill it approved on officer-involved shootings. But Sen. Larry Martin, a Pickens Republican and chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said afterward that another panel considering a bill on the release of dashcam videos will consider the proposal.

SC Agency News:

The State: SC juvenile agency bolstering security, discipline

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article65092587.html>

Andy Shain

After a series of riots and a surprise visit to the S.C. Department of Juvenile Justice's Broad River Road complex by Gov. Nikki Haley, the state's juvenile agency is putting in new plans to better handle discipline and security. The House Legislative Oversight Committee sent a letter to Haley alleging a shortage of correction officers was creating difficulties in controlling juvenile inmates. The letter also said corrections officers were told not to report or downplay incidents involving inmates, including rapes being labeled "inappropriate touching." The committee meets Thursday to discuss what to do next with the agency, which has 109 inmates at its Broad River Road complex.

Note: "What we saw two weeks ago at the Department of Juvenile Justice was unacceptable," Haley, who spent three hours at the complex Tuesday, said in a statement. "We have a team in place that is ready to do whatever it takes."

Post and Courier: Department of Juvenile Justice moves to address violent behavior

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160309/PC1603/160309338>

Cynthia Roldan

State officials are moving swiftly to address a series of violent incidents at the Department of Juvenile Justice, stressing that they are facing a new culture of teens with more troubled pasts. More than a dozen

offenders were involved in a Feb. 26 incident that started with a small fire in one of the dorms where the youth populations live. It escalated to the destruction of property. While the teens ran wild, one managed to escape DJJ's facility before being caught by law enforcement officers.

Note: The incident prompted a three-hour unscheduled and unannounced visit by Gov. Nikki Haley to the DJJ headquarters on Tuesday. Haley called the incident "unacceptable" in a written statement Wednesday.

Note: "Beginning with working meetings that led to yesterday's onsite visit to DJJ, we have a team in place that is ready to do whatever it takes — and that includes improved discipline and security measures and staff reorganization and training — to make sure the agency and those who work there are safer and stronger going forward," Haley said.

The State: Hofferth: SC agency committed to making college accessible, affordable, excellent
<http://www.thestate.com/opinion/op-ed/article65007432.html>

Tim Hofferth

Over the past five years, the average in-state tuition has increased by nearly 13 percent at our four-year public colleges and by nearly 14 percent at our two-year and technical colleges. South Carolina has the eighth-highest average tuition and fees in the nation, and our student-loan debt is above the national average. These unsustainable costs are pricing S.C. families out of higher education. At the S.C. Commission on Higher Education, we've spent the past six months taking our agency apart, looking at what we are doing, what we should be doing and how we can best serve the citizens of this great state.

S.C. Political News:

Greenville News: Sen. Lindsey Graham confronts energy secretary on MOX

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/2016/03/09/sen-lindsey-graham-confronts-energy-secretary-mox/81523818/>

Mary Orndorff Troyan

A Republican may be elected president in November and might decide to keep open a controversial plutonium recycling facility in South Carolina, so Congress shouldn't let President Obama shut it down before then, Sen. Lindsey Graham said Wednesday. Graham, who briefly confronted Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz on the issue at a hearing Wednesday, said he remains unconvinced the administration has found a better alternative to the mixed oxide fuel fabrication facility, or MOX, at the Savannah River Site near Aiken.

Post and Courier: U.S. Senate appropriators to debate funding for, and future of, the MOX program
<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160309/PC1603/160309349>

Emma Dumain

Concerns about the MOX project are starting to resonate with senior congressional lawmakers outside the South Carolina delegation. "We're talking about huge amounts of money," Alexander told Moniz, who was testifying before the subcommittee on Wednesday afternoon on his agency's fiscal 2017 budget request to Congress. Alexander added his commitment to probing the issue further was in deference to U. S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. The MOX program was originally launched to reprocess weapons-grade plutonium into commercial nuclear reactor fuel, the result of a 2000 agreement between the United States and Russia to destroy materials no longer necessary in a post-Cold War era. The project is now years behind schedule and billions of dollars over budget. The Obama administration wants to halt MOX completely and deal with the remaining excess plutonium via a "dilute and dispose" approach, which it argues would be faster and cheaper.

Opinion / Editorial Roundup:

Post and Courier: SPA sees the light on solar

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160310/PC1002/160319978>

Opinion

The maritime trade has always looked to the sun and the stars to guide ships. Now, the S.C. State Ports Authority is looking to the sun to help power its operations — and to make money. The SPA board made a wise decision last Friday to lease rooftop space to SolBright Renewable Energy LLC for solar panels to generate up to 3.7 megawatts of electricity. When completed this summer, the panels will make SPA's the state's largest rooftop solar project. Boeing's solar project will be bumped to second place with a capacity of 2.4 megawatts.

Post and Courier: Domestic violence neglect puts police in peril

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160310/PC1002/160319973>

Petula Dvorak

Nearly 1 million men and women in blue put their lives in jeopardy every day because they are too often the ones fighting the war on so many social issues that the rest of the nation refuses to properly address: domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder, poverty and gun control.

Post and Courier: Don't change alimony rules

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160310/PC1002/160319982>

Letter

I've been listening to the arguments about why alimony should be time limited, lump sum or done away with altogether, and I have to disagree with the opinions held by many (men) in our male-dominated S.C. Legislature. In South Carolina, judges set alimony on a case-by-case basis after reviewing the earnings, education and potential of both parties. Alimony can be periodic, lump sum, rehabilitative, etc. The current rules allow for flexibility on the part of the judge. Either party can ask that a judgement be revisited if there is a substantial change in circumstances. Let's leave the alimony rules alone — not bow to pressure from individuals trying to avoid their responsibilities.

South Carolina News:

The State: Pollen now, mosquitos later: Springtime in SC

<http://www.thestate.com/news/business/article65090662.html>

Roddie Burris

If you are one of many South Carolinians who have just begun to feel the first twinges of headaches, stuffy noses and weighty chests, it's likely for a familiar reason. South Carolina is almost two weeks into its tree pollen season, says Neil Kao, an allergist at the Allergic Disease & Asthma Center in Greenville. And after the pollen finally lifts, will mosquitos, South Carolina's second warm-weather terror, be far behind? Alas, two of the state's major annoyances (withering humidity is the third) are about to pay the Palmetto State their annual visits.

Greenville News: New HGTV series showcases South Carolina

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/entertainment/2016/03/09/new-hgtv-series-showcases-south-carolina/81533050/>

Elizabeth Sanders

As if we need another reason to love HGTV, the home improvement network's newest series will take place right here in South Carolina and features a Greenville native. 'Charleston Charm' will follow Ryan and Krystine Edwards as they renovate a Charleston home. In the pilot episode, the Mt. Pleasant couple will walk a young couple from California through the process of choosing and renovating a home. The series promises to showcase the city's architecture, lifestyle and landscapes. The pilot episode of 'Charleston Charm' will premiere Sunday, March 20 at noon.

The State: Missing video helps SC prison inmate win brutality case

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article65078212.html>

John Monk

State prison inmate Anthony Mann seems like the last person on earth to win a federal jury award of

\$8,100 for being treated badly by the S.C. Department of Corrections. Mann, 36, of Charleston, is serving life without parole for two execution-style killings, made escape attempts, filed numerous complaints against the prison that were dismissed and has been cited for numerous disciplinary infractions since becoming an inmate in 2002. But after a week-long trial in Columbia, a federal jury ruled that despite Mann's record, he was – in one incident – the victim of unnecessarily brutal and unconstitutional treatment by prison guards at the Broad River Correctional Institution. The trial also shone a light on the importance of video inside state prisons.

Local News:

The State: City Council takes bus tour of neighborhoods hit hard by October flooding

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article65063642.html>

Avery G. Wilks

City officials on Wednesday piled onto a bus to tour parts of Columbia hard-hit from the historic flooding last fall. The tour focused mainly on neighborhoods in the Gills Creek watershed east of downtown Columbia. The bus circled Lake Katherine and drove through flood-ravaged neighborhoods off South Beltline Boulevard. It also made a stop at the Columbia Canal, which the city has said would cost \$100 million to repair after it was breached during the storm. The tour happened as city officials weigh how to pursue and use federal flood recovery money.

Associated Press: Grant will help Charleston area plan for sea level rise

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=Ud8ciNqJ

SC State Wire

A federal grant of more than a half-million dollars will help the Charleston area better prepare for the effects of sea level rise. Rick DeVoe, the executive director of the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium, said in a release the grant comes from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It will help develop better flooding models so area governments can plan future infrastructure improvements while accounting for rising sea levels. A local match to the grant means that more than \$750,000 will be spent on the three-year project.

Times and Democrat: County to sell land to industry

http://thetandd.com/news/local/article_e2221fe6-c7a6-5ff9-9dba-214fad76b81c.html

Princess B. Williams

Orangeburg County Council is prepared to sell land to a company that wants to build a \$3.5 million distribution center at the Orangeburg County City Industrial Park. The company plans to create five new jobs, county officials say. The county refers to the company as "Project Bulldog" since its name has not been released.

The State: Bull Street property projected to have 16 entrances if state engineers OK traffic study

<http://www.thestate.com/news/business/article65092517.html>

Clif Leblanc

The expansive Bull Street development would have 16 entryways along the four major roads that frame the property. Five entryways would be located along Colonial Drive, that forms the northern boundary, and along Harden Street on the east side, according to a long-awaited but just released, 1,311-page traffic impact study. State transportation engineers must review the entire study and approve the plan before granting Hughes encroachment permits that would clear the way for road work. Bryan Jones, engineering administrator for metropolitan Columbia, said he's never seen a traffic study as large as the one submitted for Bull Street.

Independent Mail: Pendleton Oil Mill demolition work stalled

<http://www.independentmail.com/news/pendleton-oil-mill-demolition-work-stalled-2d8e9793-8f71-05c8-e053-0100007f20e2-371592721.html>

Mike Eads

Pendleton town officials said Monday that they want to talk with Pendleton Oil Mill owner John Sitton about the lack of progress in getting the site cleared. Sitton promised Mayor Frank Crenshaw and the town council late last summer that he would clear the crumbling buildings on the property, located where Main Street turns into Lebanon Road on the town's east side. The assurance came after one of the buildings collapsed onto the Norfolk Southern rail line along the east side of the property in July.

Independent Mail: Pendleton water outage blamed on equipment failure

<http://www.independentmail.com/news/pendleton-water-outage-blamed-on-equipment-failure-2da2e056-748c-4a29-e053-0100007fe033-371589461.html>

Mike Eads

Pendleton's mid-February water outage stemmed from an equipment failure that couldn't have been foreseen, according to town and county officials. Pendleton Public Works Director Matt Fleahman said the town's pump station and water tower were taken offline for routine maintenance on Feb. 15, during which town lines were supplied directly from the National Guard armory tower at Perimeter Road and U. S. 76 — one of the spots where the Anderson Regional Joint Water System feeds Pendleton's and Clemson's municipal utilities. Not long after the switch, Fleahman began getting reports of water line problems.

Post and Courier: Summerville takes steps to put limits on panhandlers

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160309/PC16/160309335>

Brenda Rindge

On Wednesday, Council gave unanimous approval to first reading of an law that spells out the parameters for “peddlers, charitable solicitors, buskers and panhandlers” — anyone soliciting money or trying to sell items on public rights-of-way. The ordinance is very similar to the one enacted by the city of Charleston last year, Summerville Mayor Wiley Johnson said. It prohibits anyone from being intimidating when approaching people to solicit. It also bans intentionally touching a person, threatening gestures and profane or offensive language. Peddlers also are not allowed to obstruct rights-of-way or affect traffic flow.

Post and Courier: Citadel releases video of grad's pursuit across campus

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160309/PC16/160309340>

The Citadel today released a video of the pursuit and arrest of a graduate early Friday on charges he led police on a chase through campus. Torrence Dwyle Forney, 44, of Hashem Drive in Charlotte was charged with failure to stop for a blue light, reckless driving and disorderly conduct. He was booked into the Charleston County jail and released on \$1,774 bail. Forney, a 1993 graduate and former football team captain, said he was opposed to a Confederate flag in the school's Summerall Chapel.

Associated Press: 'Take It Down Now' campaign targets Medal of Honor Bowl

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=a32MjcQr

SC State Wire

Members of the "Take It Down Now" campaign have written a letter to the NCAA, requesting that the group withdraw support for the Medal of Honor Bowl until the Confederate Naval Jack flag is removed from The Citadel's campus. The Post and Courier reports (<http://bit.ly/1TNTg6k>) that after the Confederate flag was removed from Statehouse grounds in Columbia, the NCAA lifted its ban on pre-determined events in South Carolina. The Medal of Honor Bowl then announced it would switch from a college football all-star game to a standard bowl game. Members of the "Take It Down Now" group say the Confederate flag in Summerall Chapel must come down. Group member James Stevens says the group is asking the NCAA to not support a bowl game until the flag comes down.

Morning News: Emergency responses tested at Coker College with live-action shooter drill

http://www.scnow.com/news/education/article_efb64026-e657-11e5-9221-53f34468ea37.html

Ardie Arvidson

Coker College looked like a true-crime scene Wednesday as ambulances, police cars and fire trucks - all

with sirens blaring - converged on the campus for a live-action shooter drill that would test the skills and readiness of Darlington County first responders and of Coker College in the event of a real shooting. It all occurred around 10:30 a.m. in the parking lot next to the science building. Participating in the exercise were the Hartsville Police Department, Hartsville Fire Department, Darlington County Emergency Management, the city of Hartsville, Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center, Darlington County Sheriff's Office, 911 Communication Center, the Red Cross, Darlington County Emergency medical Services and Coker College.

WMBF: Florence District Four superintendent fired after state of emergency declared for 2 schools
<http://www.wmbfnews.com/story/31431694/florence-district-four-superintendent-fired-after-state-of-emergency-declared-for-2-schools>

The superintendent for Florence School District Four was fired Wednesday night during a special board meeting called after the South Carolina Board of Education declared a state of emergency for two of the district's schools. Superintendent Dr. Andre Boyd was relieved of his duties Wednesday following the state board's declaration for Brockington Elementary School and Johnson Middle School on Tuesday. Florence School District Four members explained that both Brockington and Johnson students failed to achieve expected academic performance for more than 10 years.

Morning News: Florence Four superintendent ousted by board
http://www.scnow.com/news/article_5f06bade-e665-11e5-bc2a-d7c2a0906b23.html

Melissa Rollins

Just one day after the State Department of Education declared two of Florence School District Four's three schools to be in a state of emergency, the district is also without a superintendent. During a special meeting Wednesday night, the board of trustees voted to end its contract with Dr. Andre Boyd. The state of emergency, approved by the State Board of Education on Tuesday, allows S.C. South Carolina Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman to take control of two underperforming schools in District Four.

Morning News: Some residents support firing of superintendent, others object
http://www.scnow.com/news/article_92099374-e666-11e5-875a-4ff9bff146d1.html

Shamira McCray

Some Timmonsville residents support the termination of Florence County School District Four Superintendent Andre Boyd's contract. Others say the school district's board should have gotten more community opinion before acting.

Independent Mail: Businessman, former political staffer to run for Anderson County Council
<http://www.independentmail.com/news/businessman-former-political-staffer-to-run-for-anderson-county-council-2da5129f-d3bf-6f39-e053-0100-371593931.html>

Nikie Mayo

A businessman, real estate broker and former staffer of U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham has announced his intention to run for the District 1 seat on the Anderson County Council. Craig Wooten, 39, is seeking the seat that is currently held by Councilman Francis Crowder. District 1 encompasses the heart of the city of Anderson.

Sun News: Taxes, fees may be going up in North Myrtle Beach
<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/local/article65027482.html>

Emily Weaver

Property taxes and fees may be on the rise in North Myrtle Beach as city leaders wrestle with the need for more officers, road repairs and stormwater management projects that became a painful necessity when historic rains flooded parts of the city last fall. North Myrtle Beach City Council discussed a millage increase that would amount to \$8 annually for the owner of a home with an appraised value of \$100,000. The council also discussed raising the monthly stormwater management fees by \$1.50 to \$2.

Aiken Standard: Condoleezza Rice to speak at Boys & Girls Clubs of the CSRA fundraiser

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160309/AIK0101/160309348>

Dede Biles

A former secretary of state, who became one of the first two female members of the Augusta National Golf Club in 2012, will be making an appearance at a fundraiser in the area later this month. The Boys & Girls Clubs of the CSRA's 65th Anniversary Celebration: A Conversation with Dr. Condoleezza Rice is scheduled for March 31 in Augusta.

National News:

Associated Press: Anti-Trump Republicans come to terms with Cruz nomination

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:d2868fdec4c146c4b7dd813480f4d846>

Steve Peoples and Mary Clare Jalonick

Anxious Republican officials are coming to terms with the idea that their second least favorite GOP presidential candidate — polarizing Texas conservative Ted Cruz — may be the party's best last chance to stop Donald Trump. Possible Cruz supporters include reluctant Senate colleagues and former presidential rivals with strong ties to major donors, who have long feared Cruz's purist ideology but dread the prospect of a Trump nomination even more. The first-term Texas senator on Wednesday announced the backing of one former primary opponent, Carly Fiorina, and is seeking the backing of another, Jeb Bush, on Thursday.

Associated Press: Conservative, liberal groups gear up for Supreme Court fight

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:8e171b62b1b646bbbaefe9474f8220a1>

Alan Fram

Conservative and liberal groups are only beginning their battle over the Supreme Court vacancy, with a smattering of television ads and behind-the-scenes research serving as warning shots in what's sure to be an expensive fight that will color November's elections. Activity will only ramp up once President Barack Obama names someone to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia — a nomination Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and other Republicans promise the chamber will never consider. Many expect Obama to announce his pick next week.

Associated Press: Iran insists its missile tests do not violate nuclear deal

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:72c72e34fbe8498ca3d68d060aeaa950>

Nasser Karimi

Iran's foreign ministry insisted on Thursday that the missile tests carried out by the country's Revolutionary Guard this week do not violate Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers or a U.N. Security Council resolution. According to ministry spokesman, Hossein Jaber Ansari, the missiles were "conventional defensive instruments and they were merely for legitimate defense," the official IRNA news agency reported. Iran's Revolutionary Guard test-launched two ballistic missiles on Wednesday emblazoned with the phrase "Israel must be wiped out" in Hebrew — a show of power by the Shiite nation, long an opponent of Israel.

Associated Press: Pope imposes financial oversight for saints after abuses

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:c0b8dc80c0e8445d911ff3aad872e902>

Nicole Winfield

Pope Francis imposed new financial accountability regulations on the Vatican's multimillion-dollar saint-making machine Thursday after gross abuses were revealed in two books. The rules require external vigilance over individual Vatican bank accounts created for beatification and canonization causes, as well as regular budgeting and accounting to make sure the donations from the faithful are being used as intended. The reforms were imposed after Francis tasked a fact-finding commission to investigate Vatican expenditures.

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Camlin Moore

Cell: [803-206-8236](tel:803-206-8236)

Office: [803-734-8044](tel:803-734-8044)