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House budget leader: Farmers need help to survive flood damage

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — The state House's budget leader says he wants to reassure South Carolina farmers devastated by October's flooding disaster that the Legislature will help them out.

Lawmakers must help farmers survive direct crop losses estimated at \$376 million, said Ways and Means Chairman Brian White. But he is not yet proposing a specific amount for the state to pay. Federal aid is still possible, he said.

"They need to know there's somebody behind them," White, R-Anderson, told The Associated Press after announcing his push for a Palmetto Farm Aid bill. "We're going to do something to help out the No. 1 industry in South Carolina. It's the backbone of our state."

Earlier this month, hundreds of farmers packed the Statehouse to beg Gov. Nikki Haley to ask for federal money to offset losses. But the Republican governor has refused, saying farmers shouldn't be treated differently than other businesses beyond what's already available, such as subsidized flood insurance.

Haley has instead asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture to expedite insurance payments to farmers. Underinsured farmers shouldn't be bailed out,

her office has said.

But GOP Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers says those payments — even for farmers with top-notch insurance — won't come close to covering their losses, which didn't stop with the initial flooding.

While the Oct. 2-5 storm that dumped 2 feet of rain on parts of the state did the bulk of the damage, the continued rainfall worsened the problem, as crops rotted in the fields, Weathers said.

The estimated losses include \$330 million worth of fall crops destroyed or damaged in the field at harvest time and \$46 million in winter crops that

can't be planted in the muck. They follow summer crops lost to drought, he said.

Farmers' annual operating loans are coming due Dec. 31, said State Farm Bureau President Harry Ott.

White said he's stunned by Haley's position. He worries family farms won't be able to plant crops next year and will be forced out of business.

"We give away hundreds of millions in incentives every year to other corporations. Now we have farms here at home that have been here for generations, and the governor's saying, 'Too bad. You made a bad business decision,'" he said. "It was

a tragedy. That's not a bad business decision. That's an act of God."

While the state Senate's study panel on flood costs urged Haley to seek federal aid for farmers, White's push for state aid is far from certain.

Any help for farmers will be considered "along with the many other needs of our people," Senate President Pro Tem Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, said Wednesday, adding he's eager to hear details.

The federal budget Congress passed last week includes \$300 million in federal disaster aid for South Carolina and other states. How much will come to South Carolina is unclear. Haley must first submit her request.

Haley previously asked the state's congressional delegation for \$140 million to help poor homeowners, many of whom had no flood insurance.

Asked for a response to White's proposal, a Haley spokeswoman did not directly address it or farmers.

"In the wake of historic flooding, the governor and Team South Carolina immediately went to work with federal, state and local officials to take care of everyone who was impacted," Chaney Adams said. "But we know there are still people struggling, who have homes and businesses to rebuild."

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¹⁴⁸Two Syrian refugee families arrive in SC

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Two refugees from Syria have relocated to South Carolina and, despite the wishes of Gov. Nikki Haley, another Syrian family is coming.

A Social Services Department spokeswoman told local media that two Syrians were relocated to the Midlands this month through Lutheran Services Carolinas, a private resettlement agency.

That agency tells DSS another family from Syria has been cleared for resettlement in the state. The agency said it did not know when that family would arrive.

Haley wrote Secretary of State John Kerry last month requesting that no Syrians be relocated to South Carolina.

"After reviewing recent

public statements and personally speaking today with intelligence officials, it is my understanding that while our national security agencies are working tirelessly to vet potential refugees, there remain gaps in available intelligence for those fleeing Syria," she wrote.

According to the governor's office, the federal government didn't communicate with Haley's office that it was resettling the Syrians in South Carolina. Haley's office learned of the refugees from DSS.

More recently, Haley told WIS-TV in Columbia that FBI Director James Comey told her he had no background information on Syrian refugees.

The governor's office said it notified law enforcement officials about the Syrians' arrival.

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¹⁴⁸ Governor: Federal agency owes SC \$1M daily in 2016

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Gov. Nikki Haley has warned the U.S. Department of Energy that she expects South Carolina to collect a \$1 million daily fine for the agency's failure to meet a Jan. 1 nuclear fuel deadline.

In a letter obtained by The Associated Press, Haley told Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz that South Carolina "will almost certainly be forced" to sue if his agency doesn't start making payments on New Year's Day.

"South Carolina cannot stand idly by while DOE violates federal law and fails to fulfill its commitment to the state," Haley wrote in the letter dated Monday.

The Savannah River Site's mixed-oxide project — known as MOX — is intended to turn weapons-grade plutonium into commercial nuclear reactor fuel. But it's years behind schedule.

Because MOX isn't operating, by law the federal government is supposed to remove 1 metric ton of plutonium from South Carolina by Jan. 1. If not, the agency's subject to pay \$1 million a day for "economic and impact assistance," up to \$100 million yearly, until either the facility meets production goals or the plutonium's taken out of state for storage or disposal elsewhere.

However, a clause in the law makes the fine "subject to the availability of appropriations."

Asked about the letter, a spokeswoman for DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration, which manages the project, said the agency "is working to meet its commitment to the state of South Carolina." Spokeswoman Francie Israeli did not comment further.

MOX is intended to help the United States fulfill an agreement with Russia to dispose of at least 34 metric tons apiece of weapons-grade plutonium. According to NNSA, that's enough material for about 17,000 nuclear warheads.

Construction began in 2007. The General Accountability Office has said the nearly \$8 billion project is more than \$3 billion over budget.

Wilson, whose district includes SRS, said Tuesday that the project is about 70 percent complete. He applauded Haley's move, calling MOX the "only viable, legal option" under the agreement with Russia. Other benefits, he said, include that it "converts weapons-grade plutonium into green fuel."

The initial 2002 federal law that set timetables for MOX production or plutonium's removal from the state allowed for million-

dollar fines beginning in 2011. But in 2005, Congress extended the deadlines to 2014. Congress extended them again in 2013.

"South Carolina is certainly grateful to play an important role in the United States' nuclear non-proliferation efforts and for the benefits the MOX facility brings to our state, but this does not come without risk to South Carolina," Haley wrote. "The security, economic and environmental interests of South Carolina are at stake with long-term storage of these materials in our state, particularly when there is no apparent or immediate plan for its disposal or removal."

In September, Attorney General Alan Wilson warned the Department of Energy he's prepared to sue — again — if MOX isn't made a priority.

South Carolina sued the Obama administration last year after officials said they wanted to shutter the project, citing cost overruns and delays. The state dropped the suit several months later, when the administration committed to funding the project through that fiscal year. But in the months since, the administration has said it's searching for a cheaper way to dispose of the plutonium.

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148 Embrace the melting pot that is our great nation

Key figures in the Republican Party have denounced GOP front-runner Donald Trump's proposal to bar Muslim travelers temporarily from entering the United States. That includes new U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan and S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley.

"It's just an embarrassment to the Republican Party," Haley said Tuesday. "It's absolutely un-American. It's unconstitutional. It defies everything this country was based on, and it's just wrong."

Amen. As the daughter of Indian immigrants, Haley is a fine example of the melting pot that our great nation is, was and forever should be.

But for Exhibit A of the melting pot, I present the Kausler family. Consider this mix of ethnicity, culture, race, religion and more... We descend from German, Czechoslovakian and Irish immigrants. Mom was a devout Catholic. Dad didn't go to church. Or did he?

Dad used to drop the family off at a Catholic church for Mass on Sunday mornings. Then he would head to Safeway, the neighborhood grocery store. He would buy a Sunday paper and read it in the car until it was time to pick us up.

One day, we were in the family station wagon with a visitor, and we passed a landmark. "That's where Mommy goes to church!" one of us said.

A few blocks away, we passed Safeway. "That's where Daddy goes to church!" one of us said.

That was, indeed, where Dad went on Sunday morning, and Sunday morning was when people went to church. Right?

My older sister married a charming native of India, where he was raised as a Hindu. Mom and Dad never blinked.

My younger sister's husband is Jewish. Jeff and I were friends in college. A few years after we graduated, I was the sports editor of a newspaper in my hometown of Columbia, Missouri. I needed a reporter to cover Missouri football, and I convinced Jeff to give up a higher salary and move from Reno, Nevada.

When I left a couple of years later, I recommended Jeff to take my place as sports editor. I swear minutes after I was gone, he asked my sister for a date. They were married two years later. I was the best man. How many guys are the best man at a sister's wedding?

As the best man, I had to give The Toast at the wedding reception. Alcohol had been flowing by the time I got around to my duty. I started by saying there was an aspect to this union that nobody was talking about. It was time to acknowledge that this was a mixed marriage. Why was everybody so hushed? Why was this subject so taboo?

Mom was ready to faint. Jill's new mother-in-law was ready to freak. Finally, I raised my glass.

"Here," I said, "is to a Cardinals fan marrying a Cubs fan."

Now that is a culture clash.

The Cardinals fan has remained Catholic. One of their four children — gasp! — pulls for that Chicago outfit.

For a while, my brother went to Mass on Sundays while his family went to services elsewhere. Then he drifted. When I visited, he went to Mass with me, but he finally confessed that this was a charade. He was worried how I would react. My reaction: So? I'm happy that he is happy. Now he's a deacon at his Baptist church.

I was married in a tiny, rural Methodist church, but a priest

was at the minister's side. I remain Catholic. I call Kathy an honorary Catholic, because she goes to church with me, but she has not converted. Our kids were raised Catholic and went to Catholic schools, like I did.

But our younger daughter married a Protestant and now goes to a Baptist church. No big deal. He's a Braves fan. No big deal. When I first met him, he said he also liked the Cubs. Big deal. Now he claims he was kidding. He doesn't kid anymore. Our son is following in his grandfather's footsteps when it comes to church. **There are no Safeway stores in or around Magnolia, Texas, but there is a chain named Randalls. It is owned by Safeway.**

Then there's our firstborn. Rose is in a serious relationship with a man we adore. **They make a cute couple. Quite photogenic. Among other things, Eric has done some modeling. We have shown off some of the photos.**

Most people smile. **Some people frown.**

"You don't have a problem with that?" one person asked.

With what?

He's African-American, the person noted.

He is?

This is 2015, people. **Be not afraid of the differences in this world, but feel free to talk about them. Have faith and celebrate diversity. Embrace the melting pot that is the United States of America.**

And pray for those who intentionally prey on your fears.

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148 Pee Dee politicians hold differing views on statements

BY JOSHUA LLOYD
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FLORENCE — At a campaign event in Mount Pleasant last Monday, New York businessman and 2016 Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump called for a temporary shutdown of all Muslims entering the United States, causing widespread criticism from Republicans and Democrats alike.

Some Republicans in the Pee Dee say Trump's comments need more clarification and should be subject to more questioning, while several

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THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks at the Republican Jewish Coalition Presidential Forum in Washington on Dec. 3.



GOP

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Democrats in the area denounced the statements as divisive and un-American.

Trump's comments came after investigators said the San Bernardino shootings, which left 14 people dead and 27 others injured, were carried out by two radical Muslims.

He had previously drawn criticism after he reportedly called for surveillance of American mosques and said he was open to establishing a database for Muslims living in the United States.

Republicans

Chairman of the Florence County Republican Party Richard Skipper neither condoned nor condemned Trump's comments, but said some of what the GOP front-runner said was taken out of context and critical questions about the proposal were left unanswered.

"I took his comments to mean we should limit Muslims coming from the Middle East temporarily, until we can get a handle on our immigration policies," Skipper said. "People react to a quote that's not 100 percent accurate ... Of course that's an extreme position, but is there some validity to that if it's something temporary? I don't know, but I think it's certainly debatable."

He said Trump should clarify what his plan would entail and include how officials can strengthen the refugee vetting process, how long a ban would last and what would happen to Muslim refugees who are in the process of settling in America.

He added that Trump has a strong support base within Florence County, and there is a possibility of a visit by Trump before the February primaries.

State Rep. Phillip Lowe,

a Republican from Florence, didn't comment on Trump's plan specifically, but did give his thoughts on radical Islam as it re-

lates to the debate over Syrian refugees entering the United States.

"Islamic extremists believe Christians must convert or die, and that goes against the most basic constitutional right to our freedom of religion," Lowe said. "Radical Islam is not compatible with our society, and right now our government is incapable of separating the radicals from the refugees. Until we can separate them, we should not import refugees. There's plenty of room in Middle Eastern countries for those refugees."

Democrats

Lashonda Nesmith, chairwoman of the Florence County Democratic Party, said Trump is perpetuating the lie that all people of the Islamic faith are terrorists.

"We as Americans have to embrace everyone. We can't marginalize an entire race or religion and say they're all the same just because a small group is behind the terror attacks," Nesmith said. "All Muslims are not terrorists, and we have to be mindful of that."

She said Trump's comments hurt his chance of becoming the nation's next president, even though he remains atop the latest GOP voter polls.

"A lot of Democrats are minority and understand what it feels like to be marginalized," Nesmith said. "You can't penalize people because of their religion. That's not how America works. He's certainly not helping himself, and he's making the Democratic Party look more capable of understanding the people."

State Rep. Robert Williams, a Democrat from Darlington, said Trump's

mindset is closer to that of a dictator, like Adolf Hitler or Sadaam Hussein, rather than a modern American politician.

"What Donald Trump is saying is impractical, it's certainly out of line, and I don't think what he's saying

is in the heart of the American people," Williams said. "From my standpoint, those comments don't represent our country. Trump says the first thing to come to his mind to get people to talk about him."

Williams said Trump remains at the top of the polls because people love to watch an entertainer. He said Trump is the biggest spectacle in the presidential race, but that won't gain him the trust of the average voter.

"He may have a following that supports that mentality, but that's not our nation's mentality," Williams said. "I hope folks realize that he's doing more damage than he's doing good. ... He seeks attention, and unfortunately people are buying into that."

State leaders

South Carolina Republican Gov. Nikki Haley also blasted Trump's proposal after his visit, calling his statements an "embarrassment" and "unconstitutional."

"It's just an embarrassment to the Republican Party," Haley said during a news conference. "It's absolutely un-American. It's unconstitutional. It defies everything this country was based on, and it's just wrong."

Florence Republican and leader of the state Senate Sen. Hugh K. Leatherman Sr. declined to comment on Trump's proposal, and said he'd rather stay out of a political race that he's not personally involved in.

"I'm not sure what's going on in our country when you have someone like that, particularly in our state, leading the polls," Leatherman said. "I think

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I'd be better off leaving that to Mr. Trump."

U.S. Sen. Lindsay Graham, a contender in the 2016 presidential race,

called for fellow Republicans to denounce Trump's statements.

"You know how you make America great

again?" he said in a CNN interview. "Tell Donald Trump to go to hell."

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THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump greets supporters before he delivers his message during a campaign rally at the state fair in Oklahoma City on Sept. 25.





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148 Who are Trump's backers?

Candidate speaks to white working-class anxieties, poll finds

BY JAMIE SELF
The State
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COLUMBIA — Immigrants are taking U.S. jobs and whites are being discriminated against, most S.C. Republicans say, according to a new poll. And those sentiments are even stronger among S.C. GOP supporters of Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump.

The results of new Winthrop Poll questions, asked exclusively for The State newspaper, speak to anxieties held by the S.C. Republicans, overwhelmingly white, as they get ready to vote in the state's Feb. 20 GOP presidential primary.

According to the poll: 1 in 3 Trump supporters says whites face a "great deal" of

discrimination. Just 1 in 5 S.C. GOP voters agrees. 68 percent of Trump's S.C. supporters, compared to about half of S.C. GOP voters, think whites face more or the same amount of discrimination as blacks. 73 percent of Trump supporters — and 62 percent of all S.C. Republicans — say immigrants take jobs away from U.S. citizens.

S.C. GOP voters and Trump backers also express anxiety about political correctness.

Seventy-nine percent of Trump's S.C. supporters think people in the United States are afraid to say what they think because someone might be offended. Seventy-five percent of S.C. Republicans agree.

The poll results show S.C. GOP voters "feel their voice has been ignored," said Winthrop Poll director Scott Huffman.

"Someone like Trump comes along voicing their concerns, and that kind of taps into their fears, their worries. 'Here's a guy who says what I want to say and what people need to hear.' "Trump at the top Trump's aggressive, unapologetic criticism of immigrants and Muslims has drawn ire from Republican and Democratic critics alike. As a result, some political observers say the billionaire real estate mogul's days at the top of the GOP's 14-candidate presidential race are numbered.

Support for Trump will drop before the February S.C. primary, predicts Clemson political scientist Dave Woodard, a GOP activist. The "real" candidates — those who have held public office — already have started to emerge, he said.

But Trump's message resonates deeply with GOP voters nationally and in South

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Trump

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Carolina, polls show.

In the Winthrop Poll released Thursday, which surveyed 828 likely GOP primary voters, Trump leads the GOP race at 24 percent support.

National polls have shown Trump appeals to working-class whites who feel left out of the political process, and the Winthrop survey reflects that trend.

For example, Trump was the top choice of less-educated S.C. GOP voters.

Twenty-six percent of poll participants with less than a four-year college degree backed Trump, followed by U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, at 15 percent and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson at 14 percent.

"Working-class whites do feel like they've lost ... the sense that they matter politically," Huffmon said.

Forty-six percent of S.C. GOP voters in the Winthrop Poll said Christians — another powerful group of GOP voters — face a great deal of discrimination.

"Christians are overwhelmingly the dominant group (in South Carolina), and yet they feel as if their ideas are under attack, when before — 30 years ago — their ideas were unassailable," Huffmon said.

Looking for the anti-establishment Trump also is drawing on a continuation of the tea party's anger at government, said College of Charleston political scientist Gibbs Knotts.

Republicans are "not happy with some of the decisions to compromise with (Democratic President Barack) Obama," Knotts said, adding that some GOP voters feel their "party has failed them."

But not Trump. He is "the ultimate anti-establishment candidate," Knotts said.

However, Trump is not the only candidate carrying the "anti-establishment" mantle.

Attending a Cruz campaign event Monday, for example, Greenville resident Jennifer Earle said she is backing the tea party darling because she thinks he will do what he says he is going to do.

"I've seen him stand up to the establishment Republicans," the self-described tea partier said of Cruz's Senate filibusters. "I just believe he is what he says he is."

But, Earle added, she would vote for Trump "if it came down to it" because she likes how he is shaking up the GOP.

The 'silent majority' candidate?

Trump's strategy — tapping into Republicans' anger and anxieties — is reminiscent of campaigns of the past, Charleston's Knotts said.

George Wallace — the segregationist Alabama governor who ran for president in the '60s and '70s, opposing the Democratic Party's civil rights policies — was "somebody who stood up to the establishment in a lot of ways and allegedly spoke to the white silent majority," Knotts said. Like Wallace, Trump is "a demagogue who is willing to play into people's fears — whether it's about discrimination, whether it's about jobs, whether it's about all these things," said the College of Charleston political scientist.

Time will tell whether Trump's controversial statements will lead to his downfall. But, thus far, slamming prisoners of war and a Fox News Channel debate moderator, calling immigrants rapists and accusing Muslims of anti-American sentiments have not knocked Trump



from his front-runner perch.

Last week, Trump called for banning all Muslims from entering the United States after the Islamic State-inspired mass shooting in San Bernardino, California.

The Winthrop Poll came out of the field on Monday, the day Trump called for that ban. However, the poll did show high support among S.C. Republicans for starting a government database to track Muslims, an idea Trump has discussed.

A Fox News poll suggests Trump's travel ban proposal might not have hurt him.

That poll, which finished polling Tuesday, showed Trump with 35 percent backing in South Carolina, a 20 percentage point lead over Carson, his nearest challenger. But Charleston's Knotts said Trump's proposed Muslim travel ban is different from his previous controversial statements, noting it prompted a different reaction.

"Everyone from (Republican U.S. House Speaker) Paul Ryan to (Republican S.C. Gov.) Nikki Haley is saying this is unacceptable," Knotts said.

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