



The Morning
News
Florence, SC
Circ. 35092
From Page:
1
1/14/2016
61050



148 Gov. Haley proposes teacher initiatives

The Associated Press

GASTON — Gov. Nikki Haley's education improvement plans include offering students the chance to graduate from college debt-free and providing up to \$200 million annually for school construction.

The Republican governor announced the third year of her education initiatives Wednesday with state Superintendent Molly Spearman at a school in rural Gaston.

Most of it will be included in her 2016-17 budget proposal, which she'll release Friday. The announcement comes as legislators face a June deadline for developing a plan to fix South Carolina's broken education system. In November 2014, the state's high court ruled on a then-21-year-old case that the state fails to provide educational opportunities in poor, rural districts.

But Haley insists her plan has nothing to do with that lawsuit.

See **EDUCATE**, Page 3A





The Morning
News
Florence, SC
Circ. 35092
From Page:
3
1/14/2016
61050



Educate

From Page 1A

It designates \$15 million for recruiting and retaining teachers in impoverished areas. That includes annual tuition scholarships of up to \$7,500. To get the scholarship for four years, students would have to commit to working eight years in a district with turnover rates exceeding 12 percent. The incentive money would also fund scholarships for teachers and teachers' aides who already work in those districts and want to earn a certification or master's degree.

That part of Haley's proposal puts money behind an idea she first announced last year.

Haley's budget will again put \$29 million toward technology improvements — honoring the third of a three-year commitment. This year's plan expands on that pledge with an additional \$5 million designated to the neediest schools, plus \$5 million to provide roughly 10,000 poor students with Internet access at home.

New to Haley's initiative this year is a request to borrow up to \$200 million annually for schools, starting in the 2017-18 school year. Her proposal, to set aside 1 percent of the state's debt capacity for K-12 schools, would require separate legislation.

Haley said she can't ignore the leaky roofs, moldy walls and other unsafe conditions in schools she visits. Improving education includes improving the buildings where students spend most of their day, she said.

"My heart is always in rural areas," said Haley,

who grew up in tiny Bamberg. "Morale matters. ... We want them to feel safe and we want them to feel they're worthy."

Like Spearman, Haley first wants to evaluate districts' infrastructure needs. The governor's budget designates \$2.5 million toward a statewide review of school buildings.

A House panel has recommended creating a low-to-no-interest loan program for facilities. But Spearman has said poor districts can't afford to pay back such loans.

Haley's budget plan would also:

- » Provide \$19 million to raise the state's supplement for bus driver salaries.

- » Increase charter school spending by \$11.5 million.

- » Add \$1 million to expand the state's virtual school. Last school year, nearly 40,000 students statewide took a course through the online program, Spearman said. She touted it as a way to increase offerings in rural districts that otherwise can't afford it.

- » Spend \$165 million to cover growing populations at traditional schools while increasing the "base student cost" by \$80 to \$2,300.

That main funding source for schools is distributed to districts based on a 1977 formula adjusted annually for inflation. The state hasn't fully funded it since the Great Recession budget cuts. Doing so would take \$520 million more than Haley's proposing, according to the state budget office.

Haley's budget would add money through the formula for high school students taking classes to earn credit toward graduation and college.

Title: **How Trump is defying logictolead in S.C.**
 Author: BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
 Size: 76.10 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



How Trump is defying logic to lead in S.C.

BY ANDREW SHAIN
 ashain@thestate.com

The Donald Trump show is working in South Carolina.

Fueled by his feisty personality and stoked by voter anger over politics as usual, the New York billionaire has led S.C. presidential polls for six months.

Most political experts in the early primary state did not think Trump's lead would last six weeks.

Trump started his campaign by calling Mexican immigrants rapists and murderers, and saying U.S. Sen. John McCain, a former Republican presidential nominee, was not a hero for being a Vietnam War prisoner of war.

"I could not get my jaw off the floor," former S.C. GOP chairman Katon

FROM PAGE 3A

TRUMP

restaurant manager at a Trump rally on Harmon's Tree Farm near Gilbert last week. "There's not one person who does not do that."

'CONFIDENCE IS ATTRACTIVE'

Trump's anti-politician rhetoric has worked across the country as voting in the 2016 election gets underway Monday in Iowa.

Trump leads polls in Iowa and New Hampshire, the second state to vote.

In South Carolina – the third state in the GOP primary lineup, a state

Dawson said. "You cannot do that in modern-day politics. I said, 'He's committing political suicide.' "

Instead, Trump's poll numbers shot up in South Carolina, which holds the South's first GOP primary on Feb. 20.

Trump's numbers have stayed at the top despite calling a cable news anchor a bimbo, suggesting a temporary ban on Muslims entering the country and claiming falsely that he is self-financing his campaign, when he has received \$5.8 million in contributions through October.

"He's broken all the rules and paid none of the

costs," said Barry Wynn, another former S.C. Re-

publican chairman. The voters who come by the thousands to Trump's rallies across South Carolina don't care. As they listen to rock anthems and show tunes blared ahead of Trump's appearances, those supporters are angry enough at government, and tired enough about what they see as political correctness, to proclaim Trump as the candidate who can fix the country, citing the smarts that made him a household name as a real estate developer and reality television star.

"Everyone stretches the truth," said Teri Watts, a 52-year-old Lexington

SEE TRUMP, 7A

where tea party-backed politicians have found success – the thrice-married, one-time abortion-rights-supporting Trump is tops among voters of all age groups and political preferences, including evangelicals.

Trump supporters say they don't want the Republican Party pushing another establishment candidate, like former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, who failed to beat Democratic President Barack Obama in 2012.

"If (Romney) had Trump's attitude, he would have wiped them all over the place," Ed Bakay, a retired small business owner from McCormick, said while waiting to hear Trump for a third time last week.

Trump's S.C. supporters say they like how Trump talks to them.

During hourlong monologues that can veer from how well he is polling to how he is the best hope of military veterans for help to how much he thinks of his family, Trump speaks like he is holding court at a Thanksgiving table or around a backyard grill.

"He comes across with confidence, and confi-

dence is attractive," said Richard Quinn, a longtime S.C. political consultant. Trump's blunt, straight talk – and fame – excite the crowds, who wait hours to get into his rallies, more like concerts than the polite lectures at other candidates' events. "It's down to a level to where I say, 'I get it,'" said Carolyn Caughman, a 65-year-old government retiree from Elgin, who attended her sixth Trump rally last week. "People here are saying, 'This man is strong, says we're going to fix this. We believe him, and he's our last hope.' "

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 Author: BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
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Trump supporters find comfort in his lack of political correctness, which shocked state political watchers until his lead continued into 2016.

Trump's combative campaigning has turned off the state's top Republican, Gov. Nikki Haley. But his caustic comments did not prevent Trump from winning the endorsement last week from a longtime member of the state's GOP establishment, Lt. Gov. Henry

McMaster, a former state party chairman who said he appreciated the front-runner's honesty.

Former S.C. party chairman Dawson puts Trump's chances of winning the S.C. primary and the GOP's nomination at better than 50 percent.

"We thought there was no way he could offend that many people and win the nomination," he said. "And we were wrong."

POLITICAL P.T. BARNUM?

Trump's populist appeal has led to comparisons with Ronald Reagan, a former actor whose communication skills and connection with voters revolutionized the GOP after his White House win in 1980. That was the same year South Carolina cemented its status as an important early primary state by giving Reagan his first large-margin win.

"The way I hear people talk about (Trump is), 'I'm connected to him because I think he's real, genuine,'" former S.C. GOP chairwoman Karen Floyd said. The candidate more people identify with has "more of a chance, than not, (to be) elected president."

Shannon Bowen, a public relations expert who teaches at the University of South Carolina, said Trump has something in

common with famed circus owner P.T. Barnum.

Barnum would do and say anything to get people to come to his shows - from claiming falsely to have the biggest man in the world at his circus to writing letters to newspapers under assumed names complaining about his own events, she said.

"There was no such thing as bad publicity," Bowen said.

Bowen expects Trump will temper his comments if he wins the GOP nomination. But, for now, she thinks most voters understand Trump needs to deliver a bravado-laced, rough-edged message to reach his goal.

"Most people who listen don't take everything he is saying as fact," she said. "It's all part of the show."

But reality will hit soon for Trump, some political watchers predict.

"You can't run it all on

showbiz star appeal all of the time," Wynn said.

UNIQUE VOICE IN 2016

For now, however, showbiz is working for Trump.

"He's resonating because he doesn't sound like consultants, strategists and pollsters are behind him writing his comments or whispering in his ear," USC's Bowen said. "He doesn't sound like everybody else."

Trump's unscripted moments come across as authentic, former S.C. GOP chairwoman Floyd said.

"I think he's more scripted than people give him the benefit for," she said. "He knows the art of entertainment. From the second you go to one of his events and hear (the song), 'We're not going to take it' - that's so well-scripted and powerful."



GERRY MELENDEZ gmelendez@thestate.com

Donald Trump delivers his speech at Harmon Tree Farm near Gilbert Wednesday.

Title: **The down side of unfolding plan for road repairs**
 Author:
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The down side of unfolding plan for road repairs

On the surface, South Carolina residents should be happy with the course of the debate in Columbia about fixing the state's roads.

Gov. Nikki Haley is pushing a plan to spend \$345 million in fiscal 2016-17 on repairing infrastructure, with a key component of funding being a 10-cent increase in the state's gasoline tax of 16.75 cents a gallon.

But the governor is again tying the tax increase and money for roads to a corresponding decrease in state income taxes.

The Legislature appears to be on the same track, with legislation to fix roads presently being front and center in the Senate after the body's failure to pass legislation in 2015. The House has already approved legislation designating up to \$400 million per year for road repairs and making about \$50 million in cuts in income taxes.

In the Senate there is sentiment to move forward and approve a gas tax increase, but to gain the upper chamber's OK, there will have to be approval of some kind of tax cut to prevent delaying the plan or derailing it altogether. And senators are keenly aware there is the promise of a gubernatorial veto if there is a gas tax hike with no tax reductions.

Thus the prospects are road repairs that the state's residents are demanding, a gas tax increase that South Carolinians say they support and lower income taxes, at least for some. Add to the "happiness" factor the estimates that a third of the money for roads raised by an elevated gas tax will come from out-of-state residents and what's not to like?

Here's our list:

- Stalling the legislation in arguments over reforms at the S.C. Department of Transportation, most notably the big question of transferring oversight of the giant agency to the governor.

Ironing out the DOT future – and further increasing gubernatorial power – does not have to be accomplished in the context of legislation that earmarks new gas tax

money and other funds specifically to repairing existing roads.

- The equity factor. A gasoline tax increase and a plan to spend up to \$400 million on roads seem paltry against a reduction in income taxes that under the governor's plan could cost the state \$1.8 billion. The state's poorest residents would be hit hardest because they would pay more in taxes in purchasing necessary gasoline and receive no tax reduction.

- The \$400 million for roads is not nearly enough. Orangeburg Sen. Brad Hutto is pushing for up to \$800 million a year. The final number may end up somewhere between, leaving the funding at about half of the \$1.2 billion that SCDOT says is needed for repaving, bridge work and widening to get the state's roads and bridges to good condition.

- The governor's plan focuses on repairing the most heavily traveled roads and bridges. While that is a sensible approach in priorities, underfunding the road-repair plan means rural counties will be waiting a very long time for infrastructure improvements.

- Proposals to use all or most of an additional \$1.2 billion in revenue available to the state for road repairs in lieu of an increase in the gas tax. Priorities that must be addressed with the same money include court-mandated improvements in education and flood relief, particularly for farmers who lost nearly their entire crop from summer drought and October's flooding.

Getting a plan in place and moving quickly on road repairs in South Carolina are being demanded by state residents. Lawmakers should be listening, particularly in an election year. No one is excited about paying more taxes but there appears to be little doubt that state residents are willing to do just that with the gasoline tax if the money can yield improvements. Further delays put South Carolinians in danger every day and put lawmakers' political futures at risk as well.

Title: **A few corrections on Gov. Haley's State of the State**
 Author: BY CINDI ROSS SCOPPE The (Columbia)State
 Size: 77.19 square inch
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A few corrections on Gov. Haley's State of the State

BY CINDI ROSS SCOPPE

The (Columbia) State

GOV. NIKKI Haley had a lot of familiar items on her State of the State brag list earlier this month:

- “Number one in foreign investment.”
- “The number one exporter of tires.”
- “One of the fastest growing economies on the East Coast.”
- “Thanks to your support, we changed the funding formula so that no one can ever say again that we educate children based solely on where they are born and raised.”

Huh?

Did I mishear that? Did I misunderstand the change the Legislature made to the state's basic education funding formula a couple of years ago? Did the Supreme Court misunderstand it, when it continued to insist that the state was unconstitutionally failing to adequately educate children ... *based on where they are born and raised?*

I checked with a handful of legislators on Thursday, and while some had missed that line, one leading education advocate who is otherwise enthusiastic about Gov. Haley's public education agenda told me it jumped out at him. Ridiculous, he said.

For all the accomplishments the governor can

take credit for and all the smart initiatives she proposed, there were a handful of dissonant chords in her annual address. Claims that were at best misleading. If I'm going to praise her for her smart proposals, I feel obliged to point out those problem notes.

The problem with her schools claim isn't that lawmakers didn't go along with her plan to add a poverty weighting to the funding formula — they did, and it was a long-overdue change. The problem is that she grossly overstated the effect of that change — a problem that was compounded by her decision to appropriate the language of the legal and political argument that children in poor school districts still aren't receiving a decent education.

When you say “no one can ever say again that we educate children based solely on where they are born and raised,” you're saying the problem has been solved. It hasn't been, as the governor herself implicitly acknowledged with her education proposals — particularly the plan to recruit teachers to the Corridor of Shame.

As important as it was for the state to officially acknowledge that it costs

more to educate poor children than their better-off peers, simply adding that weighting didn't provide enough money to the poorest districts to address that part of the problem.

Of course, that's not the only reason changing the funding formula didn't fix those districts, and by suggesting that it did, or even could, the governor embraced the very “money is the solution” argument that she and other Republicans rightly reject. Money is a problem, but all the money in the world won't get poor children educated until we make changes in governance that will result in good teachers being willing and able to move to and remain in those schools.

The governor's next off-key claim came in her quite reasonable argument that replacing dilapidated schools in the impoverished districts is more important than constructing more college buildings. “No one can look at the tuition hikes parents and college students have seen over the last decade,” she said, “and tell me that higher education doesn't have enough money.”

Perhaps she's right that colleges have enough money, but her implica-

tion that they've gouged students is terribly misleading. The fact is that colleges have raised tuition as a direct result of the state defunding its colleges.

We've never adequately funded our colleges, and funds only got worse after lawmakers decided that lottery scholarships were “college” funding, and scaled back on the actual funding to colleges.

But scholarships merely change the name on the check, not how much money colleges receive. So colleges had to choose between reducing quality and raising tuition; they raised tuition. During the recession, lawmakers cut funding more, and colleges raised tuition more.

The governor also presented a false impression when she rightly called out senators who have refused to pass legislation allowing an independent body to investigate their compliance with the state ethics law and requiring themselves to report the sources of their income.

“The Senate has refused to even vote on either,” she said. “Repeatedly.”

It's true that the Senate never voted on those two items individually. But the Senate has voted on ethics reform, and all the versions it voted on included income disclosure.

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And in the crucial vote in February, Sens. Hugh Leatherman and Luke Rankin, outspoken tea-party Republicans, and all the Democrats succeeded in passing an amendment that stripped independent oversight from the ethics bill.

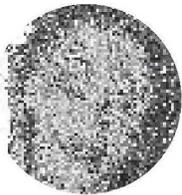
Some Democrats said they supported independent oversight but weren't willing to let other reforms die to get that. The senators who worked the hardest for reform were willing to let the bill die, because they feared that if they allowed it to pass

without independent oversight, it would be decades before they'd get another chance.

That wasn't the result Gov. Haley or I or any other reformers wanted, but it was a vote. And to deny that is not just

wrong; it's unwise for anyone who has any hopes of reviving ethics reform.

Cindi Ross Scoppe is an associate editor at The State newspaper. Write to her at cscoppe@thestate.com.



SEAN RAYFORD AP

SC Gov. Nikki Haley delivers her sixth State of the State address.

Title: **Haley set right tone in speech response**
 Author:
 Size: 14.26 square inch
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Haley set right tone in speech response

I'm really enjoying the commentary the last couple of days about Gov. Nikki Haley's "Republican response" to the State of the Union Address.

She has received strong criticism from both sides of the aisle. I remember listening to an interview with a fairly new head of NPR years ago who was asked about the criticism of NPR being a very liberal station. He said something to the effect "we receive pretty equal amount of criticism from both sides of the political spectrum which convinces us we are doing something right." I totally agree with that sentiment.

This is what sane politics is all about. It has been so long since people have seen it that they don't recognize it. She is a grown up. And yes, I am a moderate Democrat who was very impressed. I don't agree with everything she stands for but I can find some good stuff in there. I sure hope for this to be more of a model of civil discourse in the political spectrum than what is currently the norm.

We raise our children to share, be polite and respect others, consider their playmates' perspective and never call anyone names and then we have people champion selfish, hurtful, name-calling, disrespectful candidates with no regard for anyone but their own selfish views. It doesn't make sense and your children are listening.

Thanks Gov. Haley for being a positive model and throwing it out there for criticism ... you seem to be doing something right.

Lynn Coleman
Travelers Rest

Title: **Out-of-state drivers pay a third of gas tax**
 Author: CASSIE COPE CCOPE@THESTATE.COM
 Size: 21.7 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Out-of-state drivers pay a third of gas tax

CASSIE COPE

CCOPE@THESTATE.COM

Just under a third of South Carolina's gas tax is paid by out-of-state residents, according to estimates by the state Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office.

The issue of who pays the state's gas tax — now 16.75 cents a gallon — arose Wednesday as state senators tried to decide how much in tax cuts would be needed to offset a gas-tax hike, designed to raise money to repair the state's crumbling roads.

Many senators want any roads deal — including a gas-tax hike and some tax cut — to add up to a net tax decrease, said state Sen. Ray Cleary, R-Georgetown. That is because Gov. Nikki Haley has said she will veto any tax increases.

Senate Finance Committee

members are considering increasing the state's gas tax by 12 cents a gallon over three years and hiking other driving-related fees. Those tax increases would raise an added \$665 million a year to repair the state's crumbling roads.

Those senators also are considering cutting state income and business taxes by nearly \$400 million over four years.

However, once proposed higher gas taxes and fees that would be paid by out-of-state residents are factored out, the increases and cuts almost are in balance, senators were told Wednesday. There would be roughly \$70 million more raised in new taxes than in the proposed tax cuts for state residents and businesses.

Still, other tax cuts are on the

table, Cleary said Wednesday, adding there are proposals in the House to cut taxes for military personnel. In addition, Wednesday senators briefly discussed reducing the state's 6 percent sales tax.

Not all senators are convinced any tax-hike is justified.

State Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, is pushing for lawmakers to spend money from the state's one-time surplus — \$1.2 billion this year — on road repairs.

"I know that a gas-tax increase isn't necessary," said Davis, who says \$750 million of that surplus will recur every year.

Other senators say a one-time surplus will not pay the billions needed over the next decades to fix South Carolina roads.

Title: **Trump's voice resonates in SC**
 Author: ANDREW SHAIN ASHAIN@THESTATE.COM
 Size: 125.24 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Trump's voice resonates in SC

ANDREW SHAIN

ASHAIN@THESTATE.COM

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Fueled by his feisty personality and stoked by voter anger over politics as usual, the New York billionaire has led S.C. presidential polls for six months.

Most political experts in the early primary state did not think Trump's lead would last six weeks.

Trump started his campaign by calling Mexican immigrants rapists and murderers, and saying U.S. Sen. John

McCain, a former Republican presidential nominee, was not a hero for being a Vietnam War prisoner of war.

"I could not get my jaw off the floor," former South Carolina GOP chairman Katon Dawson said. "You cannot do that in modern-day politics. I said, 'He's committing political suicide.'"

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Trump's numbers have stayed at the top despite calling a cable news anchor a bimbo, suggesting a temporary ban on Muslims entering the country and claiming falsely that he is self-financing his campaign, when he has received \$5.8 million in contributions through October.

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See TRUMP, Page 11A

Trump

Continued from Page 3A

chairman.

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As they listen to rock anthems and show tunes blared ahead of Trump's appearances, those supporters are angry enough at government, and tired enough about what they see as political correctness, to proclaim Trump as the candidate who can fix the country, citing the smarts that made him a household name as a real estate developer and reality television star.

"Everyone stretches the truth," said Teri Watts, a 52-year-old Lexington restaurant manager at a Trump rally on Harmon's Tree Farm near Gilbert last week. "There's not one person who does not do that."

'Confidence is attractive'

Trump's anti-politician rhetoric has worked across the country as voting in the 2016 election gets underway Monday in Iowa.

Trump leads polls in Iowa and New Hampshire, the second state to vote.

In South Carolina — the third state in the GOP primary lineup, a state where tea party-backed politicians have found success — the thrice-married, one-time abortion-rights-supporting Trump is tops among voters of all age groups and political preferences, including evangelicals.

Trump supporters say they don't want the Republican Party pushing another establishment candidate, like former

Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, who failed to beat Democratic President Barack Obama in 2012.

"If (Romney) had Trump's attitude, he would have wiped them all over the place," Ed Bakay, a retired small business owner from McCormick, said while waiting to hear Trump for a third time last week.

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"He comes across with confidence, and confidence is attractive," said Richard Quinn, a longtime South Carolina political consultant.

Trump's blunt, straight talk — and fame — excite the crowds, who wait hours to get into his rallies, more like concerts than the polite lectures at other candidates' events.

"It's down to a level to where I say, 'I get it,'" said Carolyn Caughman, a 65-year-old government retiree from Elgin, who attended her sixth Trump rally last week. "People here are saying, 'This man is strong, says we're going to fix this. We believe him, and he's our last hope.'"

Trump supporters find comfort in his lack of political correctness, which shocked state political watchers until his lead continued into 2016.

Trump's combative campaigning has

turned off the state's top Republican, Gov. Nikki Haley. But his caustic comments did not prevent Trump from winning the endorsement last week from a longtime member of the state's GOP establishment, Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster, a former state party chairman who said he appreciated the front-runner's honesty.

Former state party chairman Dawson puts Trump's chances of winning the South Carolina primary and the GOP's nomination at better than 50 percent.

"We thought there was no way he could offend that many people and win the nomination," he said. "And we were wrong."

Political P.T. Barnum?

Trump's populist appeal has led to comparisons with Ronald Reagan, a former actor whose communication skills and connection with voters revolutionized the GOP after his White House win in 1980. That was the same year South Carolina cemented its status as an important early primary state by giving Reagan his first large-margin win.

"The way I hear people talk about (Trump is), 'I'm connected to him because I think he's real, genuine,'" former state GOP chairwoman Karen Floyd said. The candidate more people identify with has "more of a chance, than not, (to be) elected president."

Shannon Bowen, a public relations expert who teaches at the University of South Carolina, said Trump has something in common with famed circus own-

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"There was no such thing as bad publicity," Bowen said.

Trump's controversial statements have the same effect.

They draw huge crowds, including protesters who disrupt his rallies. And the media space spent covering Trump's controversial comments — such as saying his supporters would not abandon him even if he shot people on Fifth Avenue — is space that's not going to his competitors, Bowen said.

"People say they can't agree with him — and they can't look away," she said.

Bowen expects Trump will temper his comments if he wins the GOP nomination. But, for now, she thinks most voters understand Trump needs to deliver a bravado-laced, rough-edged message to reach his goal.

"Most people who listen don't take everything he is saying as fact," she said. "It's all part of the show."

South Carolina GOP consultant Quinn said Trump deserves credit for correctly reading the anger of Republican electorate, including many Palmetto State voters.

Quinn recalled how famed political consultant Lee Atwater said the secret in politics was "to know what was obvious just a little before everyone knew it was obvious."

"It's hard not to be in awe. Trump seems to strive to be politically incorrect, and the GOP base laps it up," said Quinn, who is working for a pro-Jeb Bush presidential political action committee. "He has a gut understanding of the culture of 2015-16 more than anyone in the race."

But reality will hit soon for Trump, some political watchers predict.

Once the now-12-candidate GOP field narrows, an anti-Trump candidate who is gathering convention delegates could attract \$100 million in contributions for a supportive political action committee, said Wynn, a South Carolina co-chair of Bush's campaign.

And with only two or three candidates remaining, Trump will have to become more serious on issues, providing the details that pundits have said he thus far

has lacked.

"You can't run it all on showbiz star appeal all of the time," Wynn said.

Unique voice

For now, however, showbiz is working for Trump.

"He's resonating because he doesn't sound like consultants, strategists and pollsters are behind him writing his comments or whispering in his ear," USC's Bowen said. "He doesn't sound like everybody else."

Trump's unscripted moments come across as authentic, former state GOP chairwoman Floyd said.

"I think he's more scripted than people give him the benefit for," she said. "He knows the art of entertainment. From the second you go to one of his events and hear (the song), 'We're not going to take it' — that's so well-scripted and powerful."

When the presidential race began formally last year, Dawson thought candidates — including the one he supported, former Texas Gov. Rick Perry — could start thoughtful conversations about ways to fix Washington.

Perry dropped out and the remaining hopefuls, insisting on talking traditional policy issues, are fumbling as they try to determine how to handle Trump's popularity.

"We're having emotional conversations instead," Dawson said. "This hit a vein. Sausage making is not interesting to voters. We'll see if Trump is a movement or a moment."

Whether it's part of his act or not, Trump backers often say they like that the candidate speaks out on unpopular subjects, such as deporting undocumented immigrants. His willingness to speak directly is what brings out the crowds.

"I talk like that, too. He says what's on his mind, how he feels, direct to the point," said Watts, the restaurant manager. "When he opens his mouth, everybody stops to listen to what he has to say."

They listen because Trump has tapped into the frustrations of white Christian voters, who feel like their voices are no longer heard.

"It's like he really says what we really feel — angry at how bad the economy and everything has transpired in the United States, border security," said Caughman, the government retiree. "I just feel like everything is going down the drain."

Blame Obama

Trump's supporters say the country's problems stem from Obama — from his health care insurance overhaul to his failure to contain ISIS and terrorist threats.

Other GOP White House hopefuls also complain about the president's record, but they have been drowned out by voters who prefer candidates, like Trump, who have never held elected office.

"Maybe the legacy of Barack Obama is that he drove the Republican Party crazy," said U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, the Seneca Republican who is backing Bush after dropping out of the GOP race for president last month.

Trump's legacy in South Carolina might be creating a new broad coalition of Republican voters, who once were counted on to elect governors like Carroll Campbell and senators like Jim DeMint, Wynn said.

"There's nothing wrong with that," he said. "It creates a new energy and new excitement."

Trump is winning across the spectrum of state Republican voters, polls show.

He is tops with conservatives, moderates and independents. He is winning among men and women and all age groups. He is the favorite of tea party supporters and foes.

In South Carolina, evangelicals account for roughly 6 in 10 GOP voters — a voting bloc wooed each presidential election cycle.

Newt Gingrich, who won the 2012 S.C. Republican primary over Romney, led with evangelicals as did Mike Huckabee, who nearly beat McCain in the Palmetto State in 2008.

This year, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, a conservative Texas Republican running second to Trump in the polls, is counting on those religious voters.

But it is Trump, who has been married three times and said he has not asked God for forgiveness, who is winning among South Carolina evangelicals — much to the surprise of state religious leaders.

Kevin Baird, a Charleston pastor and former director of the state Pastors Alliance, said Trump has caused a fracture among evangelicals.

Baird said that in his opinion, Trump has not done enough to prove his religious credentials despite talking about the Bible and his faith at rallies.

"I think it's a tactical and strategic



Title: **Trump's voice resonates in SC**
 Author: ANDREW SHAIN ASHAIN@THESTATE.COM
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move,” said Baird, who is leaning toward Cruz, but has not endorsed a candidate. “No one is expecting perfection. But I’m not sure a man who drops profanity easily and touts his sexual promiscuity, which popular culture may venerate, can say he is a Christian leader.”

Trump also is leading in another state with a large bloc of evangelicals — Iowa.

Graham predicts that if Trump wins the Iowa caucuses, he will take South Carolina. But the senator also thinks South Carolina voters will deliver a clear anti-Trump candidate who can win GOP support moving forward in the primaries.

“We could create an alternative,” Graham said.

South Carolina has a history of picking the GOP’s presidential nominee, failing to do so just once over the past three decades — in 2012, when Gingrich won.

Floyd expects South Carolina again to pick the party’s nominee, even if it’s Trump.

“I think there’s a reason for everything,” she said.

Title: **DHEC seeks \$35 million more in state budget**
 Author: SAMMY FRETWELL SFRETWELL@THESTATE.COM
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DHEC seeks \$35 million more in state budget

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COLUMBIA - Sputtering air monitors, leaking underground storage tanks, acid-draining mines and poorly regulated dams are among the problems that state environmental officials say they must address after years of financial neglect.

Many basic environmental programs people depend on to protect the air they breathe and the water they swim in need an infusion of cash, according to the

DHEC

Continued from Page 1A

get is \$106 million, down sharply from the levels of nearly a decade ago.

Some lawmakers say DHEC's budget request is a whopper that could be difficult to approve in a year with many other statewide needs, ranging from improving roads to addressing unexpected expenses from last fall's devastating floods.

But Rep. Murrell Smith, who chairs the Ways and Means subcommittee, said past budget cuts have hurt the state agency — and DHEC needs more revenue.

"It's what happens when we cut agencies and reduce inspectors that are in charge of our public health," Smith, R-Sumter, said last week. "We've got difficult choices. I guess it would be nice if we had known about this years ahead of time."

Part of today's financial challenge dates to the Great Recession that began late in 2008. At the time, former DHEC director Earl Hunter and his staff struggled with dwindling state revenues. At one point in the past decade, state lawmakers allocated as little as \$83 million to DHEC. Some programs, such as dam safety, sustained deep reductions, former dam officials have said.

Critics, including state Sen. Joel Louri, D-Richland, also blame DHEC for later refusing to fund programs in the name of government efficiency, when the department's actions were really for political reasons. One of the main efforts by previous director Catherine Templeton was making the agency more efficient.

state Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Since last fall, agency director Catherine Heigel has been urging state budget writers to provide the resources she believes her staff needs to perform its duties. This past week, she told a House Ways and Means subcommittee her agency can't provide many basic services without more money.

Templeton said Friday her efficiency effort saved the agency money but didn't hurt programs critical to the environment or public health. Instead, she didn't seek big budget increases because they weren't needed at the time, Templeton said.

Heigel, a former Duke Energy executive, was named DHEC chief after Templeton quit in 2015. While Heigel is drawing good marks from many for the work she has done at DHEC so far, not everyone is sure DHEC needs the \$35 million.

Sen. Lee Bright, R-Spartanburg, said state agencies have a tendency to seek big budget increases in years when state revenues are high, such as they are now.

"The 'sooey call' goes out, and everybody comes running to the trough," Bright said.

Gov. Nikki Haley doesn't think DHEC needs \$35 million in extra money next year, but she did include nearly \$18 million in new funding for the agency in her executive budget recently, records show.

Her office said that as with any budget, the governor must make decisions based on priorities. However, Haley recommended funding the agency's top priorities, including improvement in the dam safety program, the governor's office said.

One of the chief increases in spending sought by DHEC is for water quality monitoring.

The \$945,000 DHEC asked for would

"The first responsibility lies with me, to make sure you even know what has not been done," said Heigel, who became DHEC director last summer.

DHEC, one of the state's largest agencies, asked the Legislature for an extra \$35 million in the next fiscal year to bring many environmental and health programs back to a basic level of service. The department's overall state bud-

See DHEC, Page 4A

help the agency begin testing many creeks and rivers monthly for pollution, as the agency once did before budget cuts ate away at the program. The increase would allow DHEC to hire 16 additional staffers to bolster its existing staff of 23. Haley has proposed \$201,250, which the agency says would allow DHEC to hire three additional staff members.

Congaree Riverkeeper Bill Stangler and Charleston Waterkeeper Andrew Wunderley said DHEC needs every penny it can get for the program. Their organizations are testing water in some areas because DHEC's program is so threadbare, they said.

"We are essentially doing the state's job," Wunderley said. "The state, in a perfect world, would not have a need for us. But the problem is that sampling is so underfunded and undersupported by the Legislature and the governor's office that there is a huge need for groups like us to step in and fill that gap."

This year, DHEC's overall water quality monitoring budget is \$1.4 million. A decade ago, the budget was \$2.5 million.

Wunderley said sites his group tests at Shem Creek in Mount Pleasant indicate water quality is less safe for swimming than DHEC's limited testing indicates.

Monitoring the air for pollution is another program DHEC has said needs a financial boost. The agency asked for \$464,000 to help

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fix or replace aging monitoring equipment. That equipment is increasingly prone to errors that can provide inaccurate air pollution readings, Heigel said. Haley did not propose money for air quality monitoring, according to a budget sheet provided by DHEC to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Overall, the agency needs to replace 98 monitors, samplers and other equipment in the next seven years. In 2006, the overall air monitoring budget was \$2.3 million. Today, the budget for air monitoring is \$1.95 million. Inaccurate air data can affect agency decisions on whether to issue air pollution alerts or whether to permit new and expanding industries, agency officials said.

Other financial challenges DHEC outlined include:

» Abandoned gold mines. The agency requested \$450,000 to help stabilize contaminated gold mines that threaten to pollute the surrounding environment with acid and metals. Two mines are undergoing federally funded Superfund cleanups. But the state also has an ongoing financial obligation to pay some of the costs. Haley's budget plan included \$350,000 for the gold mine cleanup work.

» Dam safety and agricultural programs. The agency is seeking \$661,500

"The first responsibility lies with me, to make sure you even know what has not been done."

CATHERINE HEIGEL
 AGENCY DIRECTOR

including money for seven extra staffers to inspect and oversee South Carolina's 2,400 regulated dams. The program now has fewer than seven full-time workers and has, for years, been classified by dam safety experts as one of the most poorly funded programs in the country. Last October's devastating flood exposed problems with the program when dozens of dams failed across the state. Haley's budget also included \$661,500, records show.

» Laboratories. The agency is seeking about \$1.5 million to beef up laboratories that test samples the agency collects for pollution. It said department labs "have lacked necessary investments for over a decade and (are) now unable to reliably, securely and efficiently provide the required technology/laboratory services." Haley included \$1.1 million for labs in her budget.

» Underground storage tanks. The agency requested \$291,000 to remove underground storage tanks. Gasoline and oil that leak from the tanks are among the primary sources of groundwater pollution in South Carolina. In the past, DHEC has made funding to help cleanup tank leaks a low priority. Haley's budget also included the \$291,000.

In addition to DHEC's budget plan for the fiscal year starting July 1, the agency

also supports a request by administrators of a closed toxic waste dump on Lake Marion for another \$5 million to help improve the site so that it won't leak pollution. State taxpayers already spend about \$4 million annually to manage the site.

DHEC's state budget request for the fiscal year that begins July 1 is \$142.4 million, including the \$35 million increase. The agency noted that if the full amount is approved, DHEC's "base state budget would still be approximately \$27 million less than in fiscal year 2008."

The request also includes money for health programs, including \$500,000 for infectious disease epidemiology, \$1.75 million for tuberculosis control and \$1.8 million for nurses salaries.

The agency also wants \$11.2 million for a data center.

Title: **Haley's on the wrong track**
Author:
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Haley's on the wrong track

If I understand the paper's recent coverage correctly, Gov. Nikki Haley's 2016 spending proposals include a nominal raise in the gas tax tied to passage of a 2 percent cut in state income taxes. If enacted, these changes could result in a massive net loss of state revenues at the very time funding is critically needed.

Crumbling roads and dams, flood relief, education needs and reform, as well as realistic state agency and social welfare funding, require bold leadership and decisive action, not more fiscal "smoke and mirrors" crippling of state government.

South Carolinians should make their voices heard on this issue. If we don't get it right, we are in danger of falling even lower than our ranking of 45th in quality of life in all of the United States. Then, it sure won't be a great day to be in South Carolina!

Andrew L. Irwin
Greenville

Title: **Habitat dedicates 100th home built**
 Author: BY DEDE BILES dbiles@aikenstandard.com
 Size: 71.76 square inch
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Habitat dedicates 100th home built

BY DEDE BILES

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WARRENVILLE — Jennifer Pixley called her new three-bedroom home “a blessing from God” during a dedication ceremony Sunday afternoon in the Warren Ridge subdivision.

The gray house with white shutters is the 100th residence built by Aiken County Habitat for Humanity for a family in need since the organization’s founding in 1988.

Pixley and her four children – Arthur, Adriyanna, Aliza and Josiah – moved into the house late last year and celebrated Christmas there.

“It’s been real good,” said Pixley, who works as a cook at HarborChase of Aiken and the Hilton Garden Inn. “The neighborhood is nice and quiet, and we are

enjoying our home. Christmas was great. The best thing was seeing my children’s smiling faces and knowing they were happy.”

Pixley helped volunteers build her house, and she also plans to work on the home that will be constructed next door to hers this year by Habitat’s Women Build program.

“Ashley Noel, who will own that house, helped from the start with mine,” Pixley said. “I feel like that if she helped with mine, I should give her a hand.”

Pixley and her children received a variety of gifts, including Bibles, a bookcase, birdhouses and a handmade

Please see **HOME**, Page 10A

HOME

CONTINUED from 1A

quilt, during the dedication ceremony for their home.

“This is such a special thing for Habitat and also for the homeowner,” said Dr. Aaron L. Washington II, chairman of Habitat’s board of directors. “Even though this is our 100th house, this is Jennifer Pixley’s first. It’s a big deal for all of us.”

Habitat conducted a fundrais-

ing campaign for the 100th home, and the groundbreaking ceremony for it was held last August.

In December, Habitat celebrated the 100th house with an event at Newberry Hall for its volunteers, sponsors and homeowners.

Local elected officials also attended.

South Carolina State Sen. Tom Young, R-Aiken, read a letter from Gov. Nikki Haley and presented a certificate of recognition from the State Senate.

South Carolina State Rep. Bill Taylor, R-Aiken, presented a certificate of recognition from the State House and Aiken County Council member Andrew Siders read a resolu-

tion from his group.

“We pulled out all the stops and had a wonderful time,” said Habitat Executive Director Richard Church. “This dedication today is a nice way to quietly finish off our 100th house. Everything we had planned on for that milestone came to fruition, and now we are going to be moving on and working on our next 100 homes.”

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STAFF PHOTO BY DEDE BILES

Jennifer Pixley, third from the right, cuts the ribbon during the dedication ceremony for her house, which was the 100th home built by Aiken County Habitat for Humanity, in the Warren Ridge subdivision in Warrenton on Sunday. Looking on are Dr. Aaron L. Washington II, chairman of Habitat’s board of directors, far left, and Habitat Executive Director Richard Church, far right. Also pictured are Pixley’s children, Arthur, second from left, Adriyanna, Aliza and Josiah.



STAFF PHOTO BY DEDE BILES

Jennifer Pixley, right, holding one of her sons, Josiah, talks to Demetria Glover before the dedication ceremony for Pixley’s house, which was the 100th home built by Aiken County Habitat for Humanity, in the Warren Ridge subdivision in Warrenton on Sunday.