

Title: **Schools chief seeks \$481 million**
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 Size: 26.04 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Schools chief seeks \$481 million

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South Carolina's schools chief wants state lawmakers to spend nearly \$481 million more on public education next year.

Most of the money would benefit the state's lowest-performing school districts, Education Superintendent Molly Spearman told a House K-12 budget-writing panel Wednesday. More than \$227 million of the new spending would go to increase the state money that schools receive based on their enrollment and how much it costs to teach different types of students. The new spending also would include more money for students enrolling in college-level courses, something Gov. Nikki Haley is pushing as a way to make sure state high-school graduates are prepared for college or careers. Much of the Education Department's budget request also is aimed at helping make existing programs successful in impoverished, rural school districts, said Spearman, a Saluda Repub-

lican in her second year in office. That support, she added, has been cut back at the agency in recent years.

"I lose sleep on this one every night — some of these low-performing districts that we have not been out there ... giving them the support that we need," she said.

The state also faces an South Carolina Supreme Court mandate to improve public schools, especially in rural, impoverished districts that sued the state in 1993 for more support. The court expects an update from lawmakers on their progress on that goal when this year's legislative session ends.

Spearman's request also includes:

» \$19 million for career specialists. State law requires school districts to have one career guidance counselor for every 300 students. The money would help school districts meet that requirement.

» \$25 million to raise the sal-

ary of a starting teacher to \$30,000 a year from \$29,500. That's a priority to recruit and retain teachers, education advocates say.

» Hire an additional 56 employees, including nine to focus on state standards, reading and early childhood.

The request for new employees also includes \$1.2 million to hire 18 new teachers for the state's growing Virtual S.C. program, which offers online classes to students statewide.

South Carolina's virtual course program is the fifth largest in the country and growing rapidly, Spearman said. In the 2014-15 school year, more than 27,000 students took more than 39,000 classes online.

Spearman said her goal was to encourage impoverished, rural schools to take advantage of the high-quality teachers in the virtual programs. "Don't just settle for a warm body or a long-term substitute."

Title: **Haley: Put funds into K-12 needs; 'bloated' colleges have enough**
 Author: BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
 Size: 100.28 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



THE GOVERNOR'S STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

Haley: Put funds into K-12 needs; 'bloated' colleges have enough

BY ANDREW SHAIN

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Gov. Nikki Haley asked S.C. lawmakers to put more attention on fixing K-12 schools, rather than spending more money on the state's colleges, during her State of the State address Wednesday.

Haley advocated borrowing \$200 million to repair K-12

schools, a year after opposing borrowing for a number of other projects, including, she said, "hundreds of millions of dollars to fill a wish list for our already bloated higher education system."

"No one can look at the tuition hikes parents and students have seen over the last decade and tell me that higher education doesn't have enough money," the Republican governor told the GOP-controlled Legislature.

"And no one can drive the campuses of Clemson, South Carolina and so many others, see the brand-new facilities and massive new construction projects, and tell me that they represent our greatest need.

"That is not true of elementary, middle and high schools in Den-

SEE HALEY, 7A

➔ MORE INSIDE

The Democratic response and other reaction, **7A**

➔ ONLINE

thestate.com: More photos; also, the full text of Haley's State of the State address and the Democratic response

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HALEY FROM PAGE 1A

mark. Or Clarendon. Or Abbeville,” said Haley, who has spent the past year looking at colleges for her daughter, a high-school senior. “But if we don’t focus on K-12, and focus on it now, higher education won’t even be a possibility for far too many South Carolina children.”

Haley also called for letting the governor appoint the state superintendent of education.

To end high turnover among teachers in rural and poor school districts, she proposed to pay for the state college tuition of teachers who agree to spend eight years in rural or poor districts.

“Children deserve to know that teachers believe in them enough to stay,” Haley said. “We have to slow this revolving door.”

‘ANGELS LIVING HERE ON EARTH’

Haley also used the 41-minute speech to share her plans to fix the state’s roads, curb domestic violence and make lawmakers more accountable. She also spoke about how the state handled tragedies last year.

The shootings at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston dominated the governor’s address. A self-avowed white supremacist was charged with killing nine parishioners, including state Sen. Clementa Pinckney, a Jasper Democrat who was the church’s pastor. She asked legislators to follow Pinckney’s example as a lawmaker.

“I knew him to be a man who never seemed to speak against anyone or anything but, instead, to advocate for the people and the ideas that he believed in,” she said with Pinckney’s family in the

gallery. “We should all spend a little more time getting to know the people behind the policies.”

Haley read the names of the nine victims killed at the church and acknowledged the three survivors, two of whom attended the address. “For reasons only God knows, we lost nine amazing souls that night,” Haley said. “So too, for reasons only He knows, God decided He wasn’t ready to take three more, that He still had work for them to do.”

Haley became emotional after delivering those lines. Her voice started to shake, and she took a sip of water.

“These two women, and the precious little one who was with them that night, are proof that we have angels living here on Earth,” Haley said, fighting back tears in the House chamber.

Haley’s speech did not address her successful call to remove the Confederate flag from the State House grounds after the Charleston shooting. The issue divided the Legislature, especially the House, which debated more than 12 hours before voting to banish the Civil War banner.

Haley also thanked the family of Walter Scott, an unarmed African-American motorist who was killed by a white North Charleston police officer last year, for helping the state focus on “justice and progress,” avoiding civil unrest. “They started the calming of our community,” she said with Scott’s family in the House gallery. “Their words and actions allowed South Carolina the chance to right this wrong, the best we could, without the influence of outsiders.”

The governor also praised the work of state leaders in handling October’s historic flood.

But she did not mention requests by farmers who asked her to seek federal aid after they lost more than \$300 million in crops. Haley has said she did not want to play favorites among business owners hurt in the storms.

‘WHAT THE VOTE MIGHT LOOK LIKE’

On road repair, the top issue with many lawmakers, Haley insisted she would veto a bill that does not roll back state income taxes or reform the agency that sets road priorities. She did not mention that her proposed budget includes the start of a 10-cent-a-gallon state gas tax hike to help pay for road repairs and a far larger income-tax cut.

On domestic violence, Haley offered recommendations she unveiled two weeks ago, including adding prosecutors so police officers no longer have to prosecute some cases.

“Domestic violence is an issue that has plagued us for far too long,” she said. “Tonight, I say it will plague us to that extent no more.”

Haley clearly was aggravated at the failure again of lawmakers last year to pass stricter ethics laws. The House passed ethics bills, but the proposals sat in the Senate. Most senators have balked at allowing anyone but other senators to investigate allegations against them.

The governor went off script during her address, asking senators who back income disclosure and independent investigations to stand. Some House members rose to applaud the few senators who stood.

“This is what the vote might look like,” Haley said.

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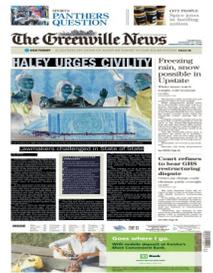
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Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



TRACY GLANTZ tglantz@thestate.com

In memory of slain state Sen. Clementa Pinckney, Gov. Nikki Haley asks lawmakers to work together for South Carolina.



Title: **Lawmakers challenged in State of State**
 Author: TIM SMITH TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
 Size: 138.57 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473

HALEY URGES CIVILITY

Lawmakers challenged in State of State

TIM SMITH

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COLUMBIA - Gov. Nikki Haley broke down in tears recalling the shooting of nine people at a Charleston church last year as she challenged a joint assembly of legislators Wednesday evening to act worthy of the greatness she said South Carolinians showed in 2015.

Haley asked lawmakers to dedicate bond money for poor schools, to agree to a roads plan, finally pass ethics reform and supply more prosecutors so law enforcement officers no longer have to handle cases of domestic violence in court.

In her sixth State of the State speech, Haley recalled last year's string of tragedies that drew national attention, including the murders of eight black parishioners and their pastor, Sen. Clementa Pinckney, the shooting death of an unarmed and fleeing black man by a North Charleston police officer and massive flooding that killed 17 people, as challenges that left South Carolina "bent but not broken."

"We are a different South Carolina than we were one year ago," she said. "Of that there can be no doubt. A place, a people, cannot go through what we have gone through and not come out changed on the other side. The questions we in this room must ask ourselves are: What does that mean? What do we do with it? My hope is that we follow the example

set by those around us."

Near the end of her speech, Haley's voice cracked as she asked lawmakers to recognize two survivors of the Emanuel 9 shooting who were in the balcony.

"Just as the nine we lost inform my belief that angels must exist in heaven, these two women, and the precious little one who was with them that night, are proof that we have angels living here on Earth," she said after pausing through tears.

The youngest governor in the nation who celebrated her 44th birthday Wednesday, Haley delivered the GOP address following President Barack Obama's State of the Union speech last week. She continued her plea for more civil political discourse Wednesday night.

"The building we sit in invites disagreement," Haley said. "That is a good thing, a healthy thing — we should not pretend to all believe the same things nor should we be silent about where and when we differ. But disagreement does not have to mean division. Honest policy differences do not need to morph into personal dislike, distrust, and disillusion."

On the issue of domestic violence, Haley said the state ranks at the top of the nation in the percentage of women killed by men.

"Domestic violence is an issue that

has plagued us for far too long," she said. "Tonight, I say it will plague us to that extent no more."

Survivors, she said, "need to know we have their backs" by ending the practice of law enforcement officers prosecuting domestic violence cases in court, one of only three states that allow such a practice.

"No survivor deserves to show up in court and see a legally untrained police officer arguing his or her side, while a

See HALEY, Page 4A

HALEY'S PRIORITIES FOR LAWMAKERS

- Pay for the replacement of law enforcement officers with prosecutors in court to handle domestic violence cases.
- Pass a roads bill that includes cutting taxes and reforming the state Department of Transportation board.
- Pass legislation to permanently dedicate 1 percent of the state's bond capacity for K-12 school facilities.
- Support incentives for teachers in poor and rural school districts that include paying for full cost of their college education if they teach in a challenged district for eight years.
- Pass ethics reform, including income disclosure and a system for independent investigation of lawmakers.

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Haley

Continued from Page 1A

highly paid defense lawyer argues on behalf of the abuser," she said. "If you join me, in South Carolina, no survivor ever will again."

Haley in her executive budget has asked for funding for 144 prosecutors to take the place of police in courts for such cases.

On the issue of education, Haley asked lawmakers to pass legislation asking voters to decide if the state education superintendent should be appointed by the governor, instead of elected, as is now done.

She asked for support of measures to provide incentives for teachers to locate and stay in rural districts, including covering the full cost of a college education for any student who agrees to teach in a challenged district for eight years, repaying student loans for recent graduates who agree to the same commitment and covering the cost of graduate courses for career educators teaching in challenged districts.

"Children deserve to know that teachers believe in them enough to stay," she said. "We have to slow this revolving door. I know we can, and now, I know we will."

She also asked lawmakers to permanently dedicate 1 percent of the state's bond capacity for new K-12 school facilities. In proposing using bonds for K-12 schools, she said she does not support borrowing for new buildings in the state's "bloated" higher education system.

"No one can look at the tuition hikes parents and students have seen over the last decade and tell me that higher education doesn't have enough money," she said. "And no one can drive the campus-

es of Clemson, South Carolina, and so many others, see the brand new facilities and massive new construction projects, and tell me that they represent our greatest need."

The K-12 facilities borrowing would not go to all school districts and the districts could not determine if they qualified, she said. Projects also would come with standards so that projects could not "break the bank or waste millions of dollars."

On roads, Haley repeated her plan she unveiled a year ago to lawmakers that she would support an increase in the state's gas tax of 10 cents per gallon, if lawmakers changed the current system of legislators electing highway commissioners and if they also approved an income tax cut.

"Pass legislation that cuts our taxes, reforms our flawed transportation system, and invests in our roads, and I will sign it," she said. "Pass legislation that does not do all three of those things, and I will veto it. The choice is clear, and it's all yours."

Haley added that her executive budget pays for this year's tax cut with surplus revenue and said enough new revenue would come in next year to do the same.

On ethics reform, Haley said her remarks were directed only to the Senate, which has not passed reforms.

She asked senators who favored income disclosure to stand and then asked senators to stand or remain standing if they also favored "true" independent investigations of legislators. She said the exercise gave the public an idea of what a vote might look like.

The Democratic response to the speech was delivered by Rep. Mandy Powers Norrell of Lancaster, who noted

that like Haley she grew up in rural South Carolina but she had a different view of the state.

"Are you proud of our public education system?" she asked. "Are you satisfied with the condition of our roads and bridges? Are you confident that if you got sick, you could afford the treatment? In the past 25 years, our state has declined in almost every category. We've been duped."

Norrell said Republicans have held majorities in the Legislature, and held almost all statewide offices in that time but education has been underfunded, the state's roads have deteriorated and healthcare has become an issue.

She charged that Haley "turned her back" on the state's farmers damaged by the floods by refusing to seek federal supplemental aid beyond loan programs and existing disaster relief. Haley has said she did not want to treat farmers any different than any other small business that was not adequately insured.

"For a generation, we have continued to elect the party that refused federal health care funds, that underfunds public education, and that refuses to address our crumbling roads and bridges," she said.

House Speaker Jay Lucas said in a statement afterward that the House already had passed ethics reforms and a road-funding bill and had made strides on education funding.

Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman in a statement thanked Haley for her leadership.

"As we begin this new year, the Senate is doing the vital work necessary to fix our state's crumbling infrastructure, educate our young people, promote business growth and move our state forward," he said.

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SEAN RAYFORD/AP

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley delivers the State of the State in the House chambers at the South Carolina Statehouse on Wednesday.



SEAN RAYFORD/AP

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley asked lawmakers to allow voters to decide whether the state education superintendent should be appointed by the governor instead of elected, as now.

Title: **Hall OK'd; DOT revamp stalls**
 Author: TIM SMITH TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
 Size: 68.51 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Hall OK'd; DOT revamp stalls

Senate panel chairman sees lack of consensus, orders more study

TIM SMITH

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COLUMBIA - For a brief time in a Senate meeting room, signs of progress appeared in the effort to improve the state's infrastructure and the agency and board that oversees South Carolina's roads and bridges.

The Senate Transportation Committee on Wednesday unanimously recommended Senate confirmation of State Transportation Secretary Christy Hall, then unanimously

and quickly approved a resolution to permanently allow the governor to appoint the transportation secretary.

Then the 15 senators turned their attention to a bill to restructure the state Department of Transportation board, an issue that stalled last year in committee, and the wheels fell off.

After more than an hour of discussion, it became clear to Sen. Larry Grooms, chairman

of the committee, that there was no consensus and the issue was sent back to subcommittee for further study.

"I don't see a lot of consensus building right now," he said afterward. "And it's a lot of the same basic arguments. Rural vs. urban, what's the focus of our roads and what is the role of the commission? And many

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Stalls

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members want their commissioner to grab their money and to bring it back without regard to the statewide transportation plan. And I'm totally against that."

The issue is a critical part of the triad of issues that must be addressed in the Senate to win approval of a road-funding bill.

A year ago, in her annual speech to the Legislature, Gov. Nikki Haley proposed raising the state's gas tax by 10 cents per gallon if lawmakers also scrapped the present system of selecting highway commissioners and reduced the state's income tax.

The House last year passed a roads bill that would increase prices at the pump by 10 cents per gallon, allow the governor to appoint highway commissioners and included a modest income tax cut.

But finding agreement on all three issues has proved vexing for senators. Democrats have approved increasing taxes and fees for roads but oppose an income tax cut. Some Republicans want the tax cut but not a gas tax increase. And many members want the DOT board restructured but disagree over how to do it.

Sen. Ray Cleary, one of the leaders of a "working group" trying to find common ground on the issues, says there is no consensus yet but the process is early in the year.

"It's eight senators," he explained.

"One will say, how do you like blue? I like green, can we decide on yellow? That's kind of where we're at. We're just trying to see if there's anything we can go back to the caucuses with and say, is there room here?"

The committee began their meeting in enthusiastic support of Hall, who rose through the ranks at DOT and led the agency through repairing and reopening hundreds of roads and bridges closed after last October's flooding.

Hall said she is focused on turning around the agency's "stability" and high turnover rate, problems that ensued, she said, from a lack of past leadership. She said she has the background to serve as DOT's leader and has been proud to lead the agency.

Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman praised Hall and DOT's work in the floods, joking that he couldn't imagine anyone not voting in support of her and if they did, they would be dealt with later.

The panel then quickly voted for the proposal to permanently extend the system in which the governor appoints the state transportation secretary, who directs the DOT. A provision in the 2007 DOT reform law made that governance model go away last year and senators stuck a proviso in the budget to extend it one year.

But Grooms said changing the law via a budget proviso is being challenged in court by Greenville businessman Ned Sloan.

He said lawmakers need to pass a law outside the budget to make the transportation secretary system permanent or risk having the courts suddenly eliminate the position.

But when the topic turned to restructuring the board, committee members fractured, as they have in past discussions on the issue.

The bill would allow the governor to appoint all commissioners. But the rub comes in where each commissioner comes from.

The board currently is made up of eight commissioners, one elected by lawmakers from each of the state's seven congressional districts and one appointed at large by the governor.

One proposal by Sen. Thomas McElveen, a Sumter Democrat, is to have a commissioner come from each of the state's 10 regional Council of Government areas, the idea being that commissioners would represent regions and not districts that do not necessarily share geography. McElveen said his highway commissioner, for instance, lives in Gaffney.

"I think these commissioners are being asked to serve way too many masters," he said. "This just makes the most sense."

But Sen. Chip Campsen, a Charleston Republican, argued that DOT commissioners should represent districts with equal population, not just common geography.

"It is about billions of dollars of road



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funding," Campsen said. "Every citizen of South Carolina should have equal representation."

Grooms argued that commissioners should work on statewide transportation plans, not to get money for their own district.

But Campsen said while it was ideal to find commissioners who were willing only to look at what is best for the state, that is not human nature.

"We need to take human nature as it is, not as we wish that it were," he said.

Grooms said lawmakers should still design a system for what is best for the

state.

Cleary asked that action on the issue be postponed until after his working group has a chance to run its ideas past the committee.

Other senators asked that the issue be carried over.

Senate Majority Leader Harvey Peeler said he was "warming" to McElveen's proposal but wanted to see how many people and road miles would be in each district.

Grooms said senators tried restructuring the board in 2007 as part of DOT reform legislation but could not agree on

a plan and left the issue alone until recent years.

If the governor would appoint commissioners as provided in the current bill, Grooms said there would be no legal requirement for each to come from equal population areas, and lawmakers could include a residency requirement such as each would have to live in a different COG area.

He said he believes for any road-funding plan to become law, it will have to include a provision giving the governor more authority to appoint DOT commissioners.

Title: **Haley offers education plans in emotional State of the State**
 Author: The Associated Press
 Size: 57.66 square inch
 Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



Haley offers education plans in emotional State of the State

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Gov. Nikki Haley outlined her plans to improve education and fight domestic violence at her State of the State address Wednesday.

But there was plenty of emotion in her speech, too, as she recalled a series of tragedies and crises her state faced in 2015, from the police shooting of an unarmed black man to the killing of nine black churchgoers during Bible study to October's historic floods. She cried as she asked for prayers for the three survivors at the church group, and lawmakers gave them minute-long standing ovation.

"The state of our state is bent but not broken," Haley said.

There was one big surprise. Haley left her prepared remarks to call out senators who have not passed her ethics reform proposals. She asked senators who support her call for more disclosure on who pays lawmakers and independent investigations of legislators accused of ethics violations to stand. Sen. Larry Martin, who has backed Haley's proposals, said only about a dozen senators stood.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we finally got to see what that vote might look like," Haley said.

The House has already passed the proposals.

Haley repeated that she will sign a bill increasing the state's gas tax to pay for road improvements only if there

is not a corresponding cut in income taxes.

Haley began and closed her speech with a call for continued unity from a state that agreed to bring down the Confederate flag — an event she did not mention in the address.

"We are a different South Carolina than we were one year ago. Of that there can be no doubt. A place, a people, cannot go through what we have gone through and not come out changed on the other side. The questions we in this room must ask ourselves are: What does that mean? What do we do with it?"

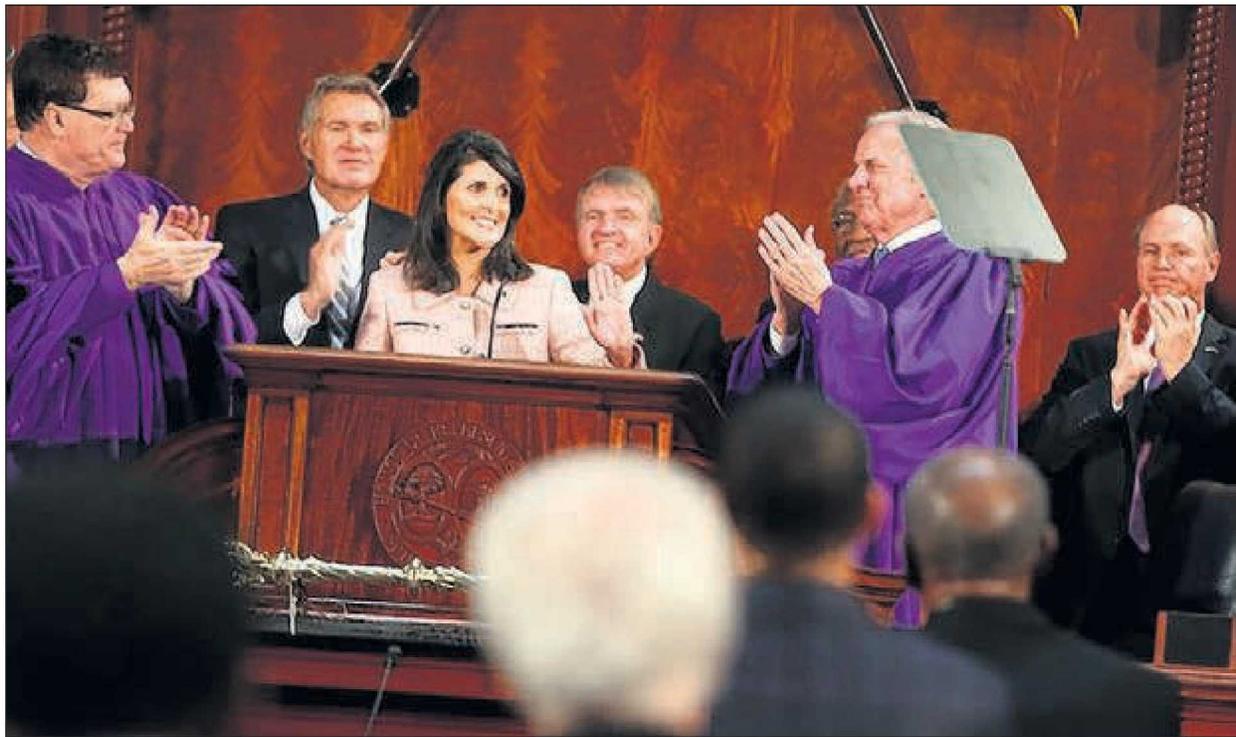
Haley is making education a cornerstone of her agenda. She wants lawmakers to provide \$15 million for annual tuition scholarships of up to

\$7,500 to students who agree to work eight years in schools with high teacher turnover. The money would also go for scholarships for teachers who want advanced degrees.

The governor also wants to be able 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. The money would go to improving buildings and other infrastructure.

"After visiting hundreds of schools across our state, I know exactly what many of today's kids don't have," Haley said. "I have seen the disparities, and I won't stand by and allow them to continue."

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TRACY GLANTZ • The (Columbia) State
Gov. Nikki Haley delivers her State of the State address at the Statehouse in Columbia.

Title: **Governor's budget has money for beaches**
 Author: By Chris Sokoloski csokoloski@southstrandnews.com
 Size: 40.14 square inch
 Georgetown, SC Circulation: 0



Governor's budget has money for beaches

By CHRIS SOKOLOSKI

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Pawleys Island Mayor Bill Otis Jr. said he was happy when he read that the governor included money in the next state budget to help restore the state's damaged beaches.

"I consider this to be very positive news if what I've read in the (media) is accurate," Otis said. "It's a wonderful start."

Gov. Nikki Haley's new budget includes \$40 million to repair the damaged beaches.

"Tourism is a big part of what we do in South Carolina," Haley said when the budget was released. "Having healthy beaches for people to come back to is important."

Otis told Town Council this month that representatives of many coastal municipalities, including himself, contacted the governor about the damage, and complained that the state was not advocating for the coast with the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"I think the governor has reacted specifically to our concerns as addressed in the letters we've sent and the letters others have sent," Otis said.

The mayor met with FEMA officials on Jan. 20 to show them

damage on the island.

He said the meeting went well and provided FEMA with more information to use to make a decision on how much the town will be reimbursed for repairing its beach.

A combination of high tides and flooding in October severely damaged the state's coastline.

Otis said the Corps of Engineers has estimated the damage to the state's beaches to be more than \$90 million.

The money in the proposed state budget will go to the state's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism to initiate emergency beach nourishment projects.

Otis is waiting to get more information on whether PRT will be required to use all the money on beach repair, and whether the town can get a share.

The money for beach repair is part of more than \$160 million in the budget related to October's flooding.

Haley has also proposed \$124 million for the state's share of disaster-related spending by federal agencies; \$1.5 million to repair National Guard Armories that were damaged by the storm; \$49 million for the Department of Transportation to cover the cost of repair

See BUDGET, Page 2A

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 Size: 40.14 square inch
 Georgetown, SC Circulation: 0

Budget has money for beaches

FROM PAGE 1A

projects for roads and bridges that are not eligible for federal reimbursement; and \$661,500 for new dam inspectors at the Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Also included in Haley's \$7.5 billion budget is \$350 million for roadwork and \$300 million in education initiatives.

Education spending proposals include: \$20 million for new school buses; \$13.5 million to attract and retain teachers in impoverished districts; and \$11 million in targeted technology spending in poor schools and home Internet access for about 10,000 students.

The governor's budget now goes to the state Legislature for approval.

Seanna Adcox from The Associated Press contributed to this story.



Otis

Title: **Courson criticizes federal offshore drilling plans**
 Author: BY SAMMY FRETWELL sfretwell@thestate.com
 Size: 54.09 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Courson criticizes federal offshore drilling plans

BY SAMMY FRETWELL
 sfretwell@thestate.com

State Sen. John Courson is criticizing federal plans to allow offshore oil and gas drilling in South Carolina, saying the practice is incompatible with the state's economy and its environment.

"Many of us who are elected officials who do not represent coastal areas are also opposed to offshore drilling in South Carolina," Courson, R-Richland, said during a conservation briefing Wednesday. "It just doesn't make sense, particularly when one looks at the fact that economic and environmental interests interlock in South Carolina."

The state Senate has no

authority to decide the matter. But Wednesday's comment by Courson, a state Senate leader who has been critical of drilling in the past, adds to the growing chorus of policymakers recently voicing opposition to drilling in the south Atlantic Ocean.

While Gov. Nikki Haley and some congressional leaders favor drilling, every city council from Hilton Head Island to Myrtle Beach has come out against allowing offshore drilling.

Republican Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster, Republican U.S. Reps. Mark Sanford and Tom Rice, Democratic U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn and Republican

state Sen. Chip Campsen are among those who also oppose drilling. Columbia City Council voted last year to oppose drilling.

Concerns focus on whether drilling could lead to oil spills that would foul South Carolina's multibillion-dollar tourism economy, which is based on clean beaches and wetlands.

The U.S. Department of Ocean Energy Management is expected by the end of this year to make a decision on whether to allow drilling in the South Atlantic. A revised draft plan to allow drilling off the coast is expected out in the next month. That

will be the last chance for the public to comment, drilling opponents said.

Environmental groups are pushing Haley to change her mind and tell the federal government not to allow drilling off the South Atlantic coast.

Haley has stuck with her position that drilling, if done properly, could help the state's economy and reduce sources of foreign oil. U.S. Rep. Jeff Duncan, R-S.C., has been among the leaders in South Carolina supporting drilling.

Wednesday's briefing is an annual meeting with senators in which conservation groups lay out their legislative priorities for the year.

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SAMMY FRETWELL/THE STATE

Dune field near ocean at Kiawah Island. Critics of oil and gas drilling say this area is the type that could be polluted if drilling is allowed. Boosters say drilling will be done safely.

Title: **Christy Hall, interim director, to run SCDOT**
 Author: BY JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press
 Size: 39.99 square inch
 Aiken, SC Circulation: 19635



Christy Hall, interim director, to run SCDOT

BY JEFFREY COLLINS
 Associated Press

COLUMBIA — A Senate committee unanimously agreed on Wednesday that interim S.C. Department of Transportation Secretary Christy Hall should hold the job permanently, and forwarded its recommendation to the full Senate.

But the Senate right now can't agree on much else about South Carolina roads.

For a second year, business leaders, drivers who have hit a growing number of potholes, and the House are clamoring for the Senate to pass a roads bill. The proposal passed last year by the House is at the top of the Senate's calendar. But every day this session, senators have carried the bill over.

Senate President Hugh Leatherman has ordered four Democratic senators and four Republicans to talk behind closed doors to come up with a solution. Gov. Nikki Haley has said she will back any deal that includes more money for roads — even through an increased gas tax; an equal tax cut, likely on income taxes; and restructuring of the board that runs the DOT. Most lawmakers agree all three items are necessary to get something passed.

"Is there any consensus on anything? I'll tell you what, the answer so far is it is all over the book," said Sen. Ray Cleary, R-Murrells Inlet, who is helping a Democrat run the bipartisan group and who has been given the task for years of getting

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road funding reform through the Senate.

That was evident at Wednesday's Senate Transportation Committee meeting. Several senators praised Hall's work so far at DOT. She was leading the agency during October's historic floods that closed more than 500 state roads and bridges. Senators said her employees worked tirelessly to fix highways and kept them up to date, so they could talk to their constituents.

But all that unanimity faded after voting to send Hall's appointment to the full Senate, which will almost certainly give her the job next week.

The committee then took up a bill to change the way the DOT Commission is appointed. Under the bill, the governor would pick nine commissioners

from around the state instead of having legislators appoint one member from each of the state's seven congressional districts, plus an at-large pick from the governor.

Transportation Committee Chairman Sen. Larry Grooms asked the committee to approve the bill so that some sort of restructuring plan could be sent to the Senate floor. He said lawmakers could alter the plan later.

Instead, the committee sent the bill back to a subcommittee. Sen. Thomas McElveen, D-Sumter, didn't like the congressional district idea, saying the same commissioner shouldn't be responsible for the two-lane Interstate 85 bottleneck near Gaffney and widening U.S. 521 nearly 140 miles away linking Sumter to Interstate 20. He suggested a bigger board with less area to cover geographically.

Sen. Chip Campsen said in theory, the congressional district idea was best because they are drawn to be even in population. "But maybe we should just abolish the whole thing. I might be for that too," said Campsen, R-Isle of Palms.

Title: **Haley gives education plans in an emotional State of State**
 Author: ASSOCIATED PRESS
 Size: 34.1 square inch
 Aiken, SC Circulation: 19635



Haley gives education plans in an emotional State of State

ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA — South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley outlined her plans to improve education and fight domestic violence at her State of the State address Wednesday.

But there was plenty of emotion in her speech, too, as she recalled a series of tragedies and crises her state faced in 2015, from the police shooting of an unarmed black man to the killing of nine black churchgoers during Bible study to October's historic floods. She cried as she asked for prayers for the three survivors at the church group, and lawmakers gave them minute-long standing ovation.

"The state of our state is bent but not broken," Haley said.

There was one big surprise. Haley left her prepared remarks to call out senators who have not passed her ethics reform proposals. She asked senators who support her call for more disclosure on who pays lawmakers and independent investigations of legislators accused of ethics violations to stand. Sen. Larry Martin, who has backed Haley's proposals, said only about a dozen senators stood.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we finally got to see what that vote might look like," Haley said.

The House has already passed the proposals.

Otherwise, Haley has already spoken about her ideas earlier this month. She again repeated she will only sign a bill increasing the state's gas



AP PHOTO/SEAN RAYFORD

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley delivers the State of the State in the House chambers at the South Carolina Statehouse on Wednesday in Columbia. Haley asked legislators Wednesday in her sixth State of the State to follow the inspirational example of the victims and survivors of last year's tragedies to make South Carolina stronger.

tax to pay for road improvements if there is not a corresponding cut in income taxes.

Haley began and closed her speech with a call for continued unity from a state that agreed to bring down the Confederate flag — an event she did not mention in the address. The rebel banner came down less than a month after the nine people were killed at the Emanuel African Methodist

Episcopal Church in Charleston in June.

"We are a different South Carolina than we were one year ago. Of that there can be no doubt. A place, a people, cannot go through what we have gone through and not come out changed on the other side. The questions we in this room must ask ourselves are: What does that mean? What do we do with it?"

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 Author: The Associated Press
 Size: 56.88 square inch
 Beaufort, SC Circulation: 11269



Haley offers education plans in emotional State of the State

The Associated Press

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Haley is making education a cornerstone of her agenda. She wants lawmakers to provide \$15 million for annual tuition scholarships of up to

\$7,500 to students who agree to work eight years in schools with high teacher turnover. The money would also go for scholarships for teachers who want advanced degrees.

The governor also wants to be able 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. The money would go to improving buildings and other infrastructure.

"After visiting hundreds of schools across our state, I know exactly what many of today's kids don't have," Haley said. "I have seen the disparities, and I won't stand by and allow them to continue."

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TRACY GLANTZ • The (Columbia) State

Gov. Nikki Haley delivers her State of the State address at the Statehouse in Columbia.