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Subject: Afternoon Clips - Wednesday, March 16, 2016

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Governor Nikki Haley News:

Associated Press: Gov. Haley to push for more foster parents in South Carolina

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

SC State Wire

Gov. Nikki Haley plans to help her social services agency get more people to become foster parents in South Carolina. Haley said Wednesday that the Department of Social Services wants to recruit about 1,500 more foster care families. To reach the goal, Haley says her cabinet agencies agreed to streamline inspections and licensing of foster homes. DSS also set up a new website at www.scfamilies.org to help families about apply to be foster parents and to help them when they get a foster child. DSS attempted a similar push in 2011, but Haley says the difference is the agency is taking a statewide approach this year, while it concentrated on local efforts five years ago.

WOLO: Gov. Nikki Haley, Director Susan Alford Announce “Champions For Children” Foster Care Recruitment Campaign

<http://www.abccolumbia.com/2016/03/16/gov-nikki-haley-director-susan-alford-announce-champions-for-children-foster-care-recruitment-campaign/>

Governor Nikki Haley, Director Susan Alford of the South Carolina Department of Social Services, and foster parents and child advocates from across the state Wednesday announced DSS’ “Champions for Children” foster care recruitment campaign. The campaign aims to recruit approximately 1,500 new licensed foster care families across the state in order to provide stability and well-being for children in the agency’s care. In an effort to streamline the process of becoming a licensed foster family, Director Alford has implemented a number of changes at the agency and has formalized partnerships with outside groups that will reduce delays and keep prospective families from becoming frustrated with the process.

The State: SC Gov. Haley, child-welfare chief, push campaign to recruit foster parents

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article66476452.html>

Jamie Self

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley and the state’s child-welfare director announced an new campaign to recruit foster families. “Right now, 54 percent of our foster children are not placed in their own county because we don’t have enough foster families within those counties to take care of them,” Haley said at a State House news conference Wednesday. Joining Haley was S.C. Department of Social Services Director Susan Alford and more than 15 foster parents. Alford said Social Services has taken steps to provide more support for foster parents as they navigate the child-welfare system and has worked with other state agencies to speed up the process of licensing foster parents. The agency also is partnering with universities and community organizations to recruit foster parents.

Note: Haley said the goal of the Champions for Children recruitment drive is “to find families who are willing to share their love, share their homes and share their life with children that are in need. These children are vulnerable. “They’ve been through a traumatic situation, but they are lovable and they want a home and they want a place that they will feel protected,” Haley said, calling on families to think about whether they could take in one more child.

Post and Courier: Gov. Nikki Haley siding with Ted Cruz in GOP race

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160316/PC1603/160319523>

Gavin Jackson

Gov. Nikki Haley is throwing her support behind U.S. Texas Sen. Ted Cruz to win the GOP nomination now that her original choice, U.S. Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, dropped out after losing his home state Tuesday. Cruz still trails in the delegate count behind front-runner Donald Trump, whose rhetoric Haley has repeatedly slammed. Haley hedged her bets on whether she will support Trump if he becomes the nominee. "Ask me when the time comes again, but as of now I strongly believe I will support the Republican nominee," Haley said. "The only thing I can say now is my hope and my prayer is that Sen. Cruz can come through this. That's who privately I'm fighting for."

Politico: Nikki Haley backs Ted Cruz

<http://www.politico.com/blogs/2016-gop-primary-live-updates-and-results/2016/03/nikki-haley-supports-ted-cruz-220884>

Nick Gass

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley on Wednesday said she hoped Ted Cruz would pull through with the Republican nomination.

The statement comes a day after Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, the candidate she had previously supported, suspended his campaign. "I thought that Marco Rubio was and is an amazing public servant. I think that he really tapped into so much of what people want in terms of the American dream," Haley told reporters in Columbia, according to a video.

Note: "I think he had a lot of knowledge in terms of what they had to do, but it obviously wasn't his time. You know the only thing I can say now is my hope and my prayer is that Sen. Cruz can come through this and that he can really get to where he needs to go."

Note: Haley declined to say whether she would formally endorse Cruz, remarking, "I don't know that that part matters."

The State: SC Gov. Haley backing Cruz after Rubio drops out

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article66464357.html>

Andy Shain

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley, a rising national Republican star, said Wednesday she is backing U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas after her choice for the White House, U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, exited the race. "My hope and my prayer is that Sen. Cruz can come through so that he can push through and really get to where he needs to go," Haley told reporters at the S.C. State House. "Because we do want a strong leader. We do want a somebody that's conservative. We do want somebody that's action minded."

Note: Haley said she sees a path for Cruz to win the GOP nomination, citing his disciplined campaign. Haley said she does not see a path for Ohio Gov. John Kasich to win the GOP nod. But she stopped short of suggesting Kasich quit the race. "I think Gov. Kasich had a good win in his home state (on Tuesday)," she said. "But what he chooses to do, that's up to him." Haley said she would back the GOP nominee in November even if it's Republican front-runner Trump. "Ask me when the time comes again," Haley said. "But, as of now, I strongly believe I will support the Republican nominee."

WLTX: Haley: Ted Cruz Should Be the GOP Nominee

<http://www.wltx.com/news/politics/haley-ted-cruz-should-be-the-gop-nominee/85426401>

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley says now that Marco Rubio is out of the GOP primary race, she'd like to see Texas Senator Ted Cruz win the nomination. Haley was asked by reporters about the current state of the Republican nomination process Wednesday afternoon.

Associated Press: House sends letter to Haley taking gas tax off the table

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=1EnJZvdl

Jeffrey Collins

Republican leaders in the South Carolina House sent a letter to Gov. Nikki Haley on Wednesday promising they won't insist on their version of a bill passed last year to get more money for roads. The promise from House Speaker Jay Lucas means any increase in the state's gas tax won't happen this year. In his letter, Lucas said the House will either agree to the Senate bill or just pass an amendment to change the way the Department of Transportation is run and send that back to the Senate.

Note: Haley supports the plan passed earlier this month by the Senate that promises to set aside \$400 million from this year's extra money in the budget for roads. Critics said that isn't enough money to widen highways in a rapidly growing state and that the money is only guaranteed for a year. Similar promises to put money into education and local government have not been kept.

Note: Haley said Wednesday the House needs to take up the Senate plan now, wondering if the 124 House members, whose seats are all up for re-election this year, were waiting until filing for the primary ends March 30 before dealing with roads. "The Senate bill is much stronger than the House bill," Haley said.

The State: House leaders outlines path on road-repair bill in letter to Haley

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article66438412.html#storylink=apmobile>

Cassie Cope

The S.C. House speaker and GOP House leaders sent a letter Wednesday to Republican Gov. Nikki Haley outlining the path they plan to take on a Senate-passed bill to raise money for road repairs. The House begins budget deliberations next week and, then, will be off for two weeks on an unpaid furlough. "Immediately following budget debate, the House will act very quickly to advance this legislation," House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, wrote in a letter, cosigned by Majority Leader Bruce Bannister, R-Greenville, and Assistant Majority Leader Gary Simrill, R-York. The House leaders also politely asked the governor — who called on voters to pressure legislators Tuesday — to back off.

Note: On Wednesday, Haley praised the Senate plan. Under that plan, she said road projects would be prioritized to reflect safety, traffic and economic development needs. Haley added she would work with House leaders over the summer to find a direct funding stream to pay for road repairs. That way, governors in future years won't have to worry about the cost of road repairs devastating the rest of the state budget. A direct funding stream would not include a net tax increase, Haley said.

Associated Press: SC governor says county councilman out of job after tax plea

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=CGDc6MXG

SC State Wire

Gov. Nikki Haley says a county councilman recently sentenced for failing to report nearly half a million dollars in income is out of a job. In an executive order obtained by The Associated Press, Haley declared vacant the Richland County Council seat held by Kelvin Washington. Washington was charged in January with failing to report almost \$427,000 in income over three years, stemming from a state investigation into county use of local sales tax money. State law says the governor can declare public positions vacant if officeholders are convicted of crimes involving "moral turpitude."

The State: EXCLUSIVE: Moral turpitude: Gov. Haley declares Richland seat held by Councilman Washington vacant

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article66404402.html>

John Monk

Gov. Nikki Haley on Wednesday removed Kelvin Washington from his seat on Richland County Council. In an executive order, Haley said she was declaring his Lower Richland council seat vacant because Washington had recently been convicted of failure to file state income tax returns for three years. Washington also was indicted Wednesday by a Richland County grand jury on felony driving under the influence causing great bodily injury, according to 5th Circuit Solicitor Dan Johnson. Washington has been absent from the past two council meetings.

Note: Failure to pay income taxes is a crime involving moral turpitude, Haley's office said Wednesday. The governor's office based its action on an attorney general's opinion it received earlier Wednesday. The opinion cited ample precedents for declaring failure to file income tax returns a crime of moral turpitude.

S.C. General Assembly News:

Associated Press: House approves 'Tucker Hipps' bill on college violations

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=8Kh25KcZ

SC State Wire

The South Carolina House has passed a bill requiring colleges to post violations committed by fraternity and sorority members to publicize the groups' record before students join. The House unanimously approved the "Tucker Hipps Transparency Act" on Wednesday. It is named for the Clemson University student found dead in Lake Hartwell in 2014 after an early-morning run with members of the fraternity he was pledging. Republican Rep. Bill Taylor says the bill will help keep students safe by allowing students and family members to go on college web sites and "size up" the organizations. He applauded Clemson in creating a "conduct reports" web page after Hipps' death.

Greenville News: House gives key approval to Tucker Hipps bill

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/politics/2016/03/16/house-gives-key-approval-tucker-hipps-bill/81852404/>

Tim Smith

Legislation to require South Carolina public colleges and universities to post student misconduct violations by fraternities and sororities has received key approval in the state House. House lawmakers voted 84-0 to give the Tucker Hipps Transparency Act second reading Wednesday as Hipps' parents watched from the balcony. The legislation would require colleges and universities to prepare reports at least twice a year listing student conduct violations by fraternities and sororities registered with the schools and involving members of the organizations. Schools would be required to report violations involving alcohol, drugs, hazing, threats, sexual assault, harm to others and endangerment.

WIS: Senate Democrats, Republicans spar over refugee bill

<http://www.wistv.com/story/31487514/senate-democrats-republicans-spar-over-refugee-bill>

Will Whitson

Sparks are flying between Republicans and Democrats in the South Carolina Senate over refugees coming into the state with Republicans saying they're preventing terrorism and Democrats saying they're leaving innocent refugees out in the cold. Senate Republicans are painting the bill as precaution against horrific terrorist attacks, but Senate Democrats are blasting the proposal saying it's a move based on no good information and both sides are stretching the debate on and on. The bill would require a certain number of refugees, 84 according to Senator Kevin Bryant, to register with DSS and SLED for vetting and tracking, and the proposal would make the refugees' sponsors responsible if a refugee is a security risk or has connections to terror organization.

WIS: Abortion bill hits major stumbling block in House

<http://www.wistv.com/story/31487076/abortion-bill-hits-major-stumbling-block-in-house>

Will Whitson

A controversial bill banning abortions after 20 weeks in the Palmetto State may be permanently stuck in limbo. A day after Gov. Nikki Haley said she would most likely sign the legislation if it passed, the bill has hit a major stumbling block in the House. One detail in the bill that differs between House and Senate versions of it -- and just a matter of two votes -- may be the difference between an abortion bill and an abortion law this year. The Senate amended the bill, which bans abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy to include two small exceptions, when the mother's life is in danger and when the child would not survive outside of the womb, the Senate voted and passed that version of the bill and sent

it back to the House. But, since the House version only includes the exception that would allow abortions if the mother's life is threatened, the bill has to go to a conference committee between chambers.

WIS: Farmers trying to recover from flood while Senate considers aid bill

<http://www.wistv.com/story/31485728/farmers-trying-to-recover-from-flood-while-senate-considers-aid-bill>

Billie Jean Shaw

Farmers in Clarendon County say times are still hard after October's historic flood ruined many of their crops. Since the flood, Manning farmer Lee McArthur says he is literally picking up the pieces of his life. He is in the midst of clearing the cotton from this field in hopes to start planting a new one. Not only did the flood wipe out his crops but McArthur says it also wiped out his income. When we last spoke to him in October he was waiting on money from his crop insurance. A few days ago he received it. Monday lawmakers pushed a bill to the Senate floor that would provide farmers impacted by the flood with money. If the bill is passed, farmers in the state could receive up to \$100,000 if they lost at a least 40 percent in crops due to the flood. Until that day, McArthur says he is remaining optimistic as he continues to do the job he loves.

The Herald: Tommy Pope sponsors SC bill to combat online sexual exploitation of kids

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/article66454852.html>

Bristow Marchant

A York legislator is sponsoring a bill to combat Internet sex crimes targeting children. State Rep. Tommy Pope, R-York, will hold a news conference at the Statehouse in Columbia on Thursday to announce his support of "Alicia's Law" in the General Assembly. Named after the victim of an online sexual predator, the bill would provide funding to combat Internet crimes against children. Pope has announced plans to run for governor in 2018.

Post and Courier: South Carolina lawmakers look to rid state of 'tampon tax,' provide free products in state buildings

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160316/PC1603/160319511>

Maya T. Prabhu

South Carolina lawmakers are considering targeting taxes that single out women's health care needs, with tampons being first on the list. A male legislator in the House of Representatives says the playing field has become so unfair that it's time the state provide the feminine hygiene product for free in all state buildings. "A menstrual cycle is a basic bodily function," Kingstree Democrat Cezar McKnight said. "We provide for all the other bodily functions, why not this one?" In the meantime, McKnight introduced legislation this week that would provide free feminine products in the bathrooms of all state-owned buildings. He didn't know the specific cost of such a provision but said it would be minimal.

Associated Press: Confederate Relic Room director doesn't mention \$3M exhibit

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=3kFhcrSY

SC State Wire

The director of South Carolina's Confederate Relic Room made a brief budget presentation to a Senate subcommittee without detailing plans for a \$3 million upgrade to display for the last Confederate flag to fly at the Statehouse. Director Allen Roberson told senators Wednesday he would answer questions about the proposal, but lawmakers had none. Roberson also didn't mention that a House budget committee approved a study to see if the Confederate Relic Room's collections should be moved out of Columbia because the museum is hidden in the larger State Museum and could attract more visitors somewhere else like Charleston. Sen. Wes Hayes says he didn't know about the House proposal or he would have asked Roberson about it.

Post and Courier: Senators unaware House members want to move Confederate Relic Room

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160316/PC1603/160319540>

Cynthia Roldan

Representatives of South Carolina's Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum went before a Senate panel on Wednesday to make their yearly budget request, but left out that House members want to move the museum elsewhere. The House's budget-writing panel unanimously approved a proposal in the state budget in February instructing the Department of Administration to explore sites in the Charleston area for the Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum. The chairman of the Senate's education budget-writing panel, Sen. Wes Hayes, R-Rock Hill, said after the meeting that he did not know of the House's decision, and would "certainly consider it." The panel took no action.

The State: SC ethics panel weighs issues involved in State House probe

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article66391732.html>

Andy Shain

The S.C. Ethics Commission is considering new binding legal opinions that could impact a probe into possible violations by S.C. lawmakers in the wake of the corruption case against former House Speaker Bobby Harrell. The commission discussed opinions Wednesday whether legislators can spend contributions on campaign services that they or their relatives run, and whether House Majority leaders can send legislative caucus business to their own firms. The panel did not make a final decision.

Herald-Journal: McCraw enters state Senate race against Bright; Talley to file Thursday

<http://www.goupstate.com/article/20160316/articles/160319768>

The first of two challengers to state Sen. Lee Bright has officially entered the state Senate District 12 race. Greer businessman Scott McCraw filed his paperwork Wednesday. Former State Rep. Scott Talley is scheduled to file with the Spartanburg County Election Board Thursday morning. McCraw, 48, a Republican, announced his plans to run in July. Talley, 39, also a Republican, said in January that he would run. Both will face Bright in the June 14 primary.

S.C. Politics News:

Associated Press: McMaster agrees to fine, repay campaign contributions

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=qF4fkgKE

SC State Wire

South Carolina Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster agreed Wednesday to pay a \$5,100 fine and to repay \$73,000 in excessive campaign contributions collected after his loss in the 2010 governor's race. In a consent order issued by the South Carolina Ethics Commission, McMaster agrees to pay the fine within six months. The order resolves a complaint filed with the commission almost two years ago stemming from the 2010 gubernatorial race in which McMaster finished third in the GOP primary and did not qualify for a runoff. McMaster then raised money to pay off his campaign debt.

The State: SC Lt. Gov. McMaster ordered to repay excess campaign contributions

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article66405137.html>

Andy Shain

The S.C. Ethics Commission ordered Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster on Wednesday to repay \$72,700 in excess campaign contributions from his 2010 run for governor and pay a \$5,100 fine. The commission found McMaster, a former U.S. attorney and state attorney general, accepted 51 contributions in excess of the \$3,500 limit in state law. McMaster also received a public warning. He is allowed to reactivate his 2010 governor's campaign account and accept contributions to repay donors for their excessive donations.

Note: "This suits me just fine. We want to comply with the law and make sure everything is done above board," McMaster told The State on Wednesday. "That's what I have always tried to do. This

order confirms is that what we're trying to do, but that we were wrong in our understanding of the law. So we'll fix that now."

Post and Courier: Lt. Gov. McMaster ordered to repay excessive campaign contributions

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160316/PC1603/160319549>

Gavin Jackson

The State Ethics Commission has ordered Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster to repay \$72,700 in excessive campaign contributions stemming from his 2010 gubernatorial bid. McMaster said — and the commission agreed — that he inadvertently received the excessive contributions which were above the \$3,500 limit, and came from 51 donors. McMaster will also have to pay a \$5,100 penalty within 180 days, the commission said Wednesday. He said the donations were raised in an effort to pay off the campaign's debts after losing in the GOP primary that year to now-Gov. Nikki Haley. The contributions were "incorrectly designated" as being for a general election to pay off debt.

Post and Courier: South Carolina Republicans snubbing Obama's SCOTUS nominee

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160316/PC1603/160319550>

Emma Dumain

President Barack Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland to serve on the Supreme Court has not changed any minds among Republicans in the South Carolina congressional delegation. Overwhelmingly they still believe the U.S. Senate should block the confirmation of any nominee to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia until a new president gets sworn into office. The reasons given for opposing Garland, chief justice on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, run the gamut.

Post and Courier: S.C. lawmakers help chart course for budget showdown in Washington

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160316/PC1603/160319518>

Emma Dumain

Nearly six months after they helped bring down then-Speaker John Boehner, three members of the South Carolina congressional delegation are at the center of another power struggle with their leadership. The House Freedom Caucus, which includes U.S. Reps. Mark Sanford, Mick Mulvaney and Jeff Duncan as members, will collectively oppose the current version of a \$1.07 trillion budget for fiscal 2017, almost guaranteeing the resolution falls short of the necessary votes on the House floor. The coalition of 40 conservative hardliners says the plan spends too much. The group wants a budget written at \$1.04 trillion, or a return to sequestration — the automatic and across-the-board spending cuts that were triggered as part of the 2011 compromise that raised the federal debt ceiling.

Greenville News: Fedalei to run as Democrat, challenge Gowdy in congressional race

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/2016/03/16/fedalei-run-democrat-challenge-gowdy-congressional-race/81868660/>

Amanda Coyne

Chris Fedalei, a 26-year-old law school graduate, will challenge Rep. Trey Gowdy in South Carolina's fourth Congressional District. Fedalei officially announced his candidacy Wednesday in Greenville and Spartanburg, focusing on the idea of service, which he says will be a theme in his campaign. Fedalei's father, grandfather and great-grandfather were military veterans; while their path was armed service, Fedalei said his is public service.

South Carolina News:

Associated Press: Army's Fort Jackson to get new 1-star general as commander

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=dTnd4Cwb

SC State Wire

The Army's largest training installation is getting a one-star general as its new leader less than a year after its present commander took over. The Department of Defense has announced that Army Brig.

Gen. John P. Johnson has been assigned as Fort Jackson's commander. Johnson serves as director of training for the Army's deputy chief of staff. Johnson has held combat posts in Iraq and Afghanistan and as deputy commander with the 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii. The announcement was made on Tuesday.

Local News:

Associated Press: Lexington prosecutor won't seek re-election after DUI arrest

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=xqNcqGt1

Meg Kinnard

Recently charged with his third alcohol-related offense, longtime Lexington County prosecutor Donnie Myers announced Wednesday that he is not seeking re-election to the office he's held for four decades. "It has been an absolute privilege and pleasure serving as the Solicitor of the 11th Judicial Circuit of South Carolina for over 40 years," Myers, 70, said in a statement released by his office. "I will be forever grateful to the many people who have given me this highest honor and extend to all of you a wholehearted thank you."

Note: The announcement from the longtime prosecutor comes after calls for his resignation from officials including Gov. Nikki Haley. Earlier this month, Haley said both Myers and Richland County councilman Kelvin Washington should step down following separate drunken driving arrests, saying it's a problem when any elected official believes he or she is above the law. Haley on Wednesday issued an executive order declaring Washington's seat vacant - a call made because of his recent guilty plea on tax charges, not the pending DUI charge. Haley took that step after seeking state prosecutors' advice on whether she could remove both Washington and Myers from office.

The State: Veteran Lexington prosecutor Myers retiring

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article66304792.html>

Andy Shain and Tim Flach

Veteran prosecutor Donnie Myers of Lexington on Wednesday announced his retirement at the end of the year. Myers said he will not seek re-election since he would be forced to step down at the end of 2017 after he reaches the mandatory retirement age of 72. "Common sense dictates against seeking re-election for such a short period of time," he said in a statement.

Note: Gov. Nikki Haley, who comes from Lexington County, asked Myers to resign this month.

WLTX: Update: Kelvin Washington Indicted on Felony DUI Charge

<http://www.wltx.com/news/local/haley-declares-richland-councilmans-seat-vacant/85237443>

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley has removed Richland County Councilman Kelvin Washington from his job because of his failure to pay taxes. In an executive order issued Wednesday, Haley declared his seat vacant. Washington was charged in January with failing to report almost \$427,000 in income over three years, stemming from a state investigation into county use of local sales tax money. The news comes on the same day Washington also was indicted by a Richland County grand jury on a felony DUI charge.

The State: Former longtime Lower Richland councilwoman Bernice Scott to file for candidacy

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article66390662.html>

Sarah Ellis

Bernice Scott, who represented Lower Richland for 20 years on Richland County Council, filed for that same District 10 seat again that until Wednesday had been held by her son-in-law, Kelvin Washington. Gov. Nikki Haley on Wednesday removed Richland County council member Kelvin Washington from the seat he held since 2008. Haley said she was declaring his Lower Richland council seat vacant because Washington had recently been convicted of the crime of failure to file state income taxes for three years.

Independent Mail: Candidates begin filing for Upstate offices

<http://www.independentmail.com/news/candidates-begin-filing-for-upstate-offices-2e1c4188-1a7d-5f30-e053-0100007f5889-372264761.html>

Kirk Brown

Republican Don Bowen is running to reclaim the South Carolina House of Representatives District 8 seat he lost two years ago. Bowen was among 10 candidates who submitted their paperwork at the Anderson County Registration and Elections office on Wednesday afternoon. The candidate filing period opened at noon Wednesday and continues until noon March 30.

The State: Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott officially files for re-election

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article66455417.html>

Sarah Ellis

Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott, one of the most prominent political figures in the Midlands, filed for re-election Wednesday at the opening of the candidate filing period for June's primaries. Lott has served as sheriff of one of the state's largest counties for 20 years. James Flowers, a former South Carolina Law Enforcement Division senior special agent who was once a Gamecock defensive lineman, has said he plans to run against Lott in June's Democratic primary. Flowers had not officially filed as of midday Wednesday.

WACH: Lexington County Sheriff to seek first four-year term

<http://wach.com/news/local/lexington-county-sheriff-to-seek-first-four-year-term>

Matthew Stevens

Lexington County Sheriff Jay Koon has filed to seek re-election for the sheriff position. Koon filed his paperwork Wednesday and is seeking his first four-year term. Koon has been in the position for less than one year and was sworn in last April. He took over for former Lexington County Sheriff James Metts who was the county's top lawman for 42 years. Metts was removed after he was charged and eventually sentenced to a federal prison on bribery charges.

The Herald: Chester sheriff race foreshadows wild 2016 election season

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/andrew-dys/article66477452.html>

Andrew Dys

Election season in Chester County – a place where elections are never dull – formally kicked off Wednesday when former Chester Police Chief Andre Williams filed to run against incumbent Sheriff Alex Underwood. Since both are Democrats, that sets up a hot race between now and the June 14 primaries. Williams seeks to be the second-ever black sheriff in Chester, following Underwood's election in 2012. After maintaining a cordial relationship for several years, the two men have not talked in months. Williams resigned as Chester police chief in 2015 to take his current position as head of security for the Chester County school district. That position was created after school officials dumped Underwood's deputies as school resource officers in favor of private security. Underwood was outraged at the decision.

Island Packet: Hilton Head council doubles mayor's speech-writing budget

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/politics-government/article66414967.html>

Rebecca Lurye

Hilton Head Island Mayor David Bennett will get \$10,000 to pay for speech-writing services in the fiscal year that begins July 1. Town Council unanimously approved the expenditure Tuesday night — up from the \$5,000 currently budgeted. Paying for speech writing is a new concept for Hilton Head mayors. Before this year, mayoral speeches were written by assistant town manager Greg DeLoach or the mayors themselves.

Associated Press: Call center expansion bringing 300 jobs to Charleston

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=IhFI3SKQ

SC State Wire

A call center in suburban Charleston is expanding, investing almost \$2 million to create about 300

jobs. Call Experts announced on Wednesday that the new jobs will be created over the next five years at its existing facility in the West Ashley area of Charleston. Call Experts, which was established in 1982, has its headquarters in Charleston. It's expanding its current facility by more than 7,000 square feet.

Post and Courier: Charleston's Call Experts to create 310 jobs with \$1.8 million expansion

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160316/PC05/160319545>

David Wren

Telephone answering service Call Experts will expand its Charleston County operations with a \$1.8 million investment that will create 310 new jobs over the next five years, the state's Commerce Department said Wednesday. The Charleston-based company, established in 1982, is one of North America's leading call centers and answering-service firms, with three locations along the East Coast. The company primarily provides business communities near their locations with virtual receptionist and call center services, including switchboard services, scripted answering and call screening.

Associated Press: Fitesa Simpsonville investing \$52M in Greenville County

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

SC State Wire

A company that makes fabric products for a variety of uses is expanding in Greenville County, investing \$52 million and adding nearly 40 jobs. Fitesa Simpsonville makes products for the hygiene, medical and industrial markets. It announced Wednesday that it is adding to its Simpsonville plant and will create the new jobs during the next five years. The plant opened in 1990 and is one of 11 that the company operates in eight countries around the world.

WIS: City Council approves \$5 million for Bull Street project

<http://www.wistv.com/story/31480588/city-council-approves-5-million-for-bull-street-project>

Mike DeSumma

Columbia's big new development project around Spirit Communications Park is getting some big new money behind it. The Columbia City Council approved \$5 million for the big housing and entertainment project Tuesday. Those funds will come in the form of general obligation bonds, which are used to help pay for things like sewer work, gutters and other pieces of public infrastructure that will support the 170-acre site.

Sun News: Horry County jobs agency loses one expansion, secures another

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/local/article66433787.html>

Charles D. Perry

One of the three Horry County companies that industry recruiters had expected to expand will not follow through with those plans. Josh Kay, president of the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corp. (EDC), confirmed Wednesday that one of the trio of projects he'd hoped to announce has been canceled, though he insists he's still optimistic about the EDC's recruitment potential. Despite losing a deal, Kay said one of the other companies he's courting is considering hiring more workers than initially anticipated and Frontier added more positions than he projected, meaning the total number of jobs created would still be close to 150.

Greenville News: DHEC failed to properly monitor water for lead

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/environment/2016/03/16/dhec-failed-properly-monitor-water-lead/81835408/>

Nathaniel Cary

South Carolina's health department did not monitor drinking water quality of some of the state's public water systems that exceeded the Environmental Protection Agency's action level for lead as closely as it should have, an investigation by The Greenville News has found. At least 10 systems that have triggered the action level for lead between 2011 and 2015 should have been required to take semi-annual lead samples to ensure that measures being implemented to reduce lead in the drinking water

were effective, but the state Department of Health and Environmental Control allowed those systems to remain on a three-year monitoring schedule.

Associated Press: No warnings, just tickets for littering in Horry County

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

SC State Wire

Horry County leaders are tired of their county being trashed. So now there will be no tolerance for litterbugs. The Sun News of Myrtle Beach reports (<http://bit.ly/1pLalf4>) that county council decided Tuesday that litterbugs will no longer be given warnings when they are caught tossing trash. Now they will simply be written a ticket. Councilman Al Allen proposed the new policy. Allen says secondary roads are being trashed and it seems residents, not tourists, are the culprits. The county is on the Grand Strand, the heart of the state's \$19 billion tourism industry.

Associated Press: Iwo Jima monument at Parris Island refurbished

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=bNUyozx7

SC State Wire

The Iwo Jima Monument at the Parris Island Marine Recruit Depot on the South Carolina coast has been refurbished, extending its life by at least 20 years. The monument is one of three one-third sized models of the famous monument of the raising of the flag atop Mount Suribachi during the World War II Battle of Iwo Jima in 1945. The latest renovations cost more than \$450,000 and took 2,500 hours. The refurbished monument was unveiled Monday.

Post and Courier: North Charleston to consider replacing Riverfront fountain

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160316/PC16/160319541>

Brenda Rindge

A broken splash fountain might start flowing again in North Charleston's Riverfront Park just in time for the warm weather. City Council members on Thursday are set to discuss spending up to \$200,000 to replace the 10-year-old fountain. The interactive fountain is one of the main features of the Riverfront Park, according to North Charleston officials, but has been dry for several months due to a leak and a broken pump. "It's a key feature of the park, especially for the kids," said city spokesman Ryan Johnson.

Island Packet: Change in Beaufort County school start times draws mixed response

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/community/beaufort-news/article66390602.html>

Stephen Fastenau

Reaction was swift to Beaufort County school board's vote Tuesday to change school start times. Supporters say the later start for older children will improve academics and safety in commuting to and from school. Beginning next school year, Beaufort County middle and high schools students — except for Hilton Head — will go to school from about 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Elementary schools will go from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m.

The Herald: Health scores show big gaps between York, Chester, Lancaster

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/article66287602.html>

Bristow Marchant

Residents in the tri-county area have some of the best health outcomes in the state. And some of the worst. The results of a nationwide, county-by-county study released Wednesday show a wide gap between neighboring counties in the Upstate of South Carolina. York County reported the third-best health outcomes in South Carolina, while its nearest neighbors ranked decidedly lower.

National News:

Associated Press: Obama nominates Garland to high court, challenging GOP

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:6fe101b4bef54f989d939bccc81873fc>

Kathleen Hennessey

President Barack Obama nominated appeals court judge Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court on Wednesday, thrusting a respected moderate jurist and former prosecutor into the center of an election-year clash over the future of the nation's highest court. Obama cast the 63-year-old Garland as "a serious man and an exemplary judge" deserving of a full hearing and a Senate confirmation vote, despite Republican vows to deny him both. Standing in the White House Rose Garden with Garland, Obama argued the integrity of the court was at stake and appealed to the Senate to "play it straight" in filling the seat left vacant by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia. "It's supposed to be above politics," Obama said of the high court. "It has to be. And it should stay that way." Republican leaders, however, held to their refusal to consider any nominee, saying the seat should be filled by the next president after this year's election.

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