

Title: **House approves borrowing \$200M annually for K-12 schools**  
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# House approves borrowing \$200M annually for K-12 schools

SEANNA ADCOX  
 ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA - South Carolina could borrow up to \$200 million annually to repair and replace deteriorating K-12 public schools statewide, under legislation approved Tuesday by the House.

The measure, advanced by a 98-5 vote, is meant to partly address the state Supreme Court's ruling in November 2014 that the Legislature must do more to provide educational opportunities in poor, rural school districts. Lawmakers face a June

deadline to present justices with their plan for fixing South Carolina's broken education system.

Another perfunctory vote, expected Wednesday, would send the bill to the Senate. If it is enacted, borrowing would be at least a year away.

The bill first requires a statewide evaluation of districts' infrastructure needs, funded by \$1.5 million in legislators' 2016-17 budget proposals. Legislators would then receive a priori-

ty list of projects approved by the State Board of Education, to be updated yearly.

State Superintendent Molly Spearman said the initial focus will be on districts that initially sued the state in 1993 over equitable funding.

"We owe it to them to begin there," she said Tuesday. "So many areas have no means of raising additional revenue for capital projects other than on

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## Borrowing

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the backs of the same few businesses that might be there."

Spearman said the bill could also help areas of "extreme growth" keep up with student population. It could also improve efficiencies by building facilities, such as vocational centers, that serve multiple districts, she said.

The bill allows for money to be awarded to districts as either grants or loans, depending on the project's size and/or ability to pay.

Rep. Leola Robinson-Simpson, D-Greenville, questioned whether the borrowing amount "is at all adequate."

"What impact would be made with that amount and how long would it take to really improve our schools?" she asked.

Such questions are unanswerable until the evaluation's completed, said House Ways and Means Chairman Brian White, R-Anderson.

He said the proposal offers a way to help districts while being accountable to taxpayers.

"Without this, it won't get any better," he said. "This is a plan that's sustainable."

Gov. Nikki Haley presented the \$200 million idea in January, saying she can't ignore the leaky roofs, moldy walls and other unsafe conditions in schools she visits. Education includes improving the buildings where students spend most of their day, she said, pointing to blown-up photos of decrepit conditions. "We cannot continue to ignore that in much of our state, we have a facilities problem," she said in her State of the State address a week later.

"Children can't learn as well when the walls of their classrooms are crumbling around them. Teachers can't teach as well when the hallways they walk are littered with puddles. Our students and our teachers deserve no less than to go to school each day in a place that is safe and clean."



Title: **Senate OKs Eartha Kitt Day measure**

Author:

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### **Senate OKs Eartha Kitt Day measure**

Senators gave key approval Tuesday to make every Jan. 17 in South Carolina "Eartha Kitt Day" in honor of the late actress. After one more routine vote, it heads to Gov. Nikki Haley's desk. Kitt was born on Jan. 17, 1927, on a farm in Orangeburg County. — AP

Title: **Restroom bill fails to get needed support**  
 Author: TIM SMITH TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM  
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# Restroom bill fails to get needed support

**TIM SMITH**

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COLUMBIA - Three GOP senators on the Senate General Committee say they oppose the transgender bathroom bill and a fourth said he is torn, a number which likely means the bill is dead for the year.

Sen. Greg Gregory of Lancaster, Sen. Ray Cleary of Murrell's Inlet and Sen. Paul Campbell of Goose Creek told *The Greenville News* Tuesday they are opposed to the bill.

Sen. Lee Bright, the bill's sponsor, said he needs nine of the 10 GOP members of the 17-member committee to approve it in order for it to advance to the floor. Democrats oppose the bill. If three GOP members oppose it and a fourth is on the fence, the bill cannot come out of committee.

"I don't think the bill is going anywhere," Sen. Joel Lourie, a Columbia Democrat and one of the bill's main opponents, told *The News*. "I can tell

you it's dead."

Cleary said he hasn't done much research on the bill.

"I just know it's not coming out of committee and it can't make the crossover deadline," he said.

The bill would bar people from using public restrooms, changing rooms and locker rooms that do not correspond with their biological sex and prevent local governments from passing legislation allowing such use.

The legislation is similar to a recently enacted North Carolina law that has spawned controversy, protests and a move to repeal the law. North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory issued an executive order several weeks ago addressing some provisions in the law though leaving unchanged the most talked about part that requires people to use bathrooms of their sex at birth.

"I haven't been to any of the meetings to understand why we would be doing it," Cleary said. "I know major industry opposes it. I haven't taken a position but if it came out I would vote no."

Gregory said North Carolina is "wrapped around the axle on this matter."

"South Carolina doesn't need to make the mistakes they made," he said. "To me, it's a solution looking for a problem."

Campbell said Tuesday he "wants to keep the government out of the bathrooms."

"I don't think the government has a place in my bathroom," he said. "Let the people decide that."

Sen. Ronnie Cromer, a Newberry

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## Bill

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County Republican and chairman of the Senate Rules Committee, said he sees both sides of the matter.

"I don't want to hurt any prospective business clients from coming into South Carolina," he said. "But there are a lot of people who are passionate about allowing someone of the opposite sex come in, especially women. And I'm also concerned about the safety of some of those people. I'm just completely torn on it right now."

Lourie took to the floor Tuesday to chastise Bright for privately polling GOP members of the committee after reading about his efforts in *The News*.

He said Senate rules require all members of a panel being polled to be present, notified and polled.

"There has not been a member of my caucus that has been polled," he said. "You know and I know there is no bathroom bill. If you want to have a hearing, let's have a hearing tomorrow and vote it up or down. The people of this state deserve that this vote not be taken in private, sir."

Bright said every member of the committee would be allowed to sign the poll sheet. He said there can be a hearing if a majority of members want a hearing, but he said the chairman of the committee, Sen. Kevin Bryant of Anderson, who also is a co-sponsor of the bill, recommended polling members.

"I think there is a public outcry now that there is a scream from North Carolina about how devastating it's going to be," he responded from the podium. "Sure they have lost a couple of concerts. But as far as businesses leaving, we have a tireless minority when it comes to this that makes a lot of noise. But there is a majority of people out there that don't think it's OK for men to go into little girl's restrooms."

Bright has acknowledged that passage of the bill is an uphill climb. Any bills not passed over to the other chamber by the end of this week face a higher voting threshold to be taken up in the other chamber. Bills that do not pass this year die because it is the end of a two-year session.

Opponents of the bill, including transgender adults and youth, said if passed the bill could trigger further



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harassment and violence against transgender people federal law.  
and was unnecessary. Three mayors spoke against the Proponents of the bill said it was needed to protect  
bill as well as former State Education Superintendent children and adult females from people posing as trans-  
Inez Tenenbaum, who warned it could cost the state bil- gender females.  
lions of dollars in federal funding because it violated Gov. Nikki Haley has said the bill is unnecessary.

Title: **SC wrong about nuclear project, says federal government**  
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## LAWSUIT RESPONSE

# SC wrong about nuclear project, says federal government

BY MEG KINNARD  
 Associated Press

### COLUMBIA

South Carolina's lawsuit calling for million-dollar fines and plutonium removal should be dismissed because the state is wrongly interpreting the laws governing a long-delayed nuclear fuel project, the U.S. Energy Department said in court documents.

In its first official response to the state's lawsuit, the federal government also argued Monday that any potential fines for project delays should be handled in a different court system, not federal district court.

In February, South Carolina accused the federal government of acting unconstitutionally in failing to complete the mixed-oxide facility by

**“  
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*Chaney Adams,  
 spokeswoman for  
 Gov. Nikki Haley*

Jan. 1. The lawsuit seeks daily fines of \$1 million and plutonium removal.

The project at the Savannah River Site was intended to turn weapons-grade plutonium into commercial nuclear reactor fuel to help the United States fulfill an agreement with Russia to dispose of at least 34 metric tons apiece of weapons-grade plutonium. Since the plant isn't operating, by law the federal government was

supposed to remove 1 metric ton of plutonium from South Carolina by this year or pay \$1 million a day for “economic and impact assistance,” up to \$100 million yearly, until either the facility meets production goals or the plutonium is taken out of state.

In its response, the federal government argued that Congress made it clear that removal deadlines might not be met and that's why the fine provision was included. In other words, Energy Department lawyers argue, the agency has the choice between processing or removing the materials or paying fines to the state.

In a statement, a spokeswoman for Gov. Nikki Haley reiterated the governor's stance that the government must uphold its deal with the state.

“South Carolina will not be a dumping ground for nuclear waste,” said spokeswoman Chaney Adams. “We deserve better than the years of broken promises we've seen from the federal government, and we won't back down on what is an important ... issue for the people of our state.”

Title: **Haley heading to D.C. totalk Gitmo closure**  
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## Haley heading to D.C. to talk Gitmo closure

BY MEG KINNARD

*Associated Press*

COLUMBIA

Gov. Nikki Haley is going to Washington later this week to voice her concerns over the possible transfer of Guantanamo detainees to sites including South Carolina.

The governor will be among those testifying Thursday before the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee, according to Haley's office. The panel discussion is focused on implications for state and local communities if the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, prison is closed.

Testimony is also expected from representatives from the Major

County Sheriff's Association and the Center for

American Progress, as well as Leavenworth, Kan., County Attorney Todd Thompson, according to the committee's website.

Haley, a second-term Republican, has been outspoken in her opposition to the transfer of remaining detainees. A Naval brig 15 miles from Charleston is among possible transfer sites already surveyed by a Defense Department team, as well as locations in Colorado and Kansas.

Legislation introduced Monday on Capitol Hill would maintain a ban on transferring prisoners from Guantanamo to the United States.