

Title: **Haleys release tax returns for '14, '15**
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Haleys release tax returns for '14, '15

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COLUMBIA - The total income for Gov. Nikki Haley and her husband dropped last year, according to state and federal tax returns the couple released Friday.

Haley, who has released tax returns in prior years following the practice of her predecessors, on Friday released forms for 2014 and 2015.

They show the couple's total wages for 2015 were \$144,578 and their total income was \$170,661, down from wages of \$164,593 and total income of \$191,581 for 2014.

Michael Haley, a captain in the South Carolina Army National Guard, transitioned from a full-time employee to a part-

time role last year, according to the Governor's Office, accounting for the drop in his wages from \$70,695 in 2014 to \$51,039 in 2015.

Haley's taxable income as governor for 2014 was \$93,897, slightly higher than the \$93,537 reported as taxable income in 2015.

The couple reported total taxable income of more than \$284,000 in 2013, aided by investments and the governor's book sales.

Last year, the Haleys paid \$19,681 in federal taxes and \$7,692 in state taxes, down from \$23,919 for federal taxes paid in 2014 and \$7,692 in state taxes.

The Haleys received \$4,750

in federal refunds for 2015, which were credited toward the next year's taxes, and \$2,871 in

state refunds. That's down from \$7,244 in federal refunds and \$6,917 in state refunds due the couple in 2014.

Charitable giving for the couple also dropped, from \$3,630 in 2014 to \$2,500 in 2015, according to the forms. Among their 2015 gifts was \$1,000 to Mount Horeb United Methodist Church, \$1,000 to the Palmetto Health Foundation and \$500 to the Special Olympics.

The Haleys collected \$19,166

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Haley

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in investment interest income last year in an investment involving the governor's father.

The couple filed itemized deductions of \$45,182 for 2015, down from \$52,221 in 2014. In addition to chari-

table gifts, the couple's 2015 itemized deductions included \$12,457 in taxes and \$30,225 in interest.

Though a date for the returns was not filled in, the Governor's Office said the couple filed their returns on time for both years.

In past years, the couple reported more investment income and payments tied to her 2012 memoir, "Can't Is Not an Option."

The couple has donated profits from the book sale to charity, including the governor's Original Six Foundation.

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LAUREN PETRACCA/STAFF

The total income for Gov. Nikki Haley and her husband dropped last year.

Title: **Haleys' income and charitable giving falls over past two years**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
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Haleys' income and charitable giving falls over past two years

BY SEANNA ADCOX
Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and her husband earned a combined \$171,000 in 2015, a steep drop from two years ago and the couple's lowest income of her tenure, according to 2014 and 2015 tax returns she allowed reporters to view Friday.

The decline is largely due to no more profits from her book and less investment income.

A real estate investment with her father earned \$19,200 in 2014 and 2015, compared with \$70,500 in income from several properties in 2013. Details on the property were not provided.

In 2013, the Haleys reported earning more than \$282,000. Their actual income was higher, though how much is unclear. Capt. Michael Haley's income wasn't taxable during his 11-month deployment to Afghanistan that year with the South Carolina

Army National Guard and therefore was not reported.

The Haleys' charitable donations plummeted from \$126,000 in 2013 to \$2,500 last year. During her fifth year as South Carolina's CEO, she gave \$1,000 each to Mt. Horeb United Methodist and the Palmetto Health Foundation and \$500 to the Special Olympics.

The couple's taxable work wages fell from \$164,600 in 2014 to \$144,600 last year.

That's because Capt. Haley switched to a part-time job with the National Guard.

He is "pursuing opportunity in the private sector," said the governor's spokesman Rob Godfrey.

Michael Haley also is paid as a reservist. Income from that part-time job increased last year. State law sets the governor's salary at just over \$106,000. However, deducting pension contributions put her taxable wages at less than \$94,000.

The Haleys paid \$19,681 in

federal taxes and \$6,201 in state taxes last year. Their refunds were \$4,750 and \$2,871, respectively.

During her first year in office, the Haleys earned \$367,000 in combined income.

Of that, \$200,000 was the initial advance from her book, "Can't is Not an Option." The remaining advance of \$175,000 was paid in 2012, the year it was released. Their 2013 earnings included \$105,000 from book profits.

Haley donated \$200,000 of the book income to her community aid foundation, the Original Six. Her parents and siblings referred to themselves as the "original six" in that they were the only Indian-American family in tiny Bamberg, where she grew up. Haley announced in December 2011 that she would use all profits from the book to set up the nonprofit to help the state's poorest counties. Godfrey has said she paid more than \$84,000 owed

in taxes for 2011 from the first advance.

Friday was the first time in two years Haley has made her taxes available. Her office notes her 2014 and 2015 taxes were paid on time. The documents viewed had no filing date, but they also showed no penalties.

In August 2010, The Associated Press reported the then-GOP gubernatorial nominee had repeatedly paid fines for not paying income taxes on time. The Haleys paid nearly \$4,500 on late federal taxes owed for tax years 2005 to 2009.

In all, Haley has allowed reporters to view returns that date to 2004, the year she first won her state House seat. The Haleys' combined income increased from \$65,700 that year to \$196,000 in 2009, then fell to \$156,000 as she ran for governor.

"The governor was happy to make her tax returns available for review," Godfrey said.

Title: **Aiken School District ACT scores are slightly below state average**
 Author: STAFF REPORTS editorial@aikenstandard.com
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Aiken School District ACT scores are slightly below state average

STAFF REPORTS

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Composite scores for 2016 graduates in the Aiken County Public School District fell slightly below the state average on the ACT national college admissions examination.

Students scored 18.3 compared to the state average of 18.5, according to a news release issued Friday by the district.

Students also scored just below the state average on the ACT English and reading exams but at the state level on the math and science tests.

According to the release, Aiken County public school students scored 17 on the English exam, compared to 17.3 for the state, and 18.7 on the reading exam, compared to 19 in the state. The students' score of 18.5 in math and 18.6 in science equalled the state average.

The 2016 district and state high school graduates were the first class required by law to take the ACT, which S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley signed on May 30, 2014. Before this year, students chose to take the exam voluntarily.

In 2015, 41 percent of the district's seniors, 603 students, self-selected to take the ACT, according to the release. In 2016, 1,553 seniors as required took the test.

"Those self-selected, college-bound graduates scored 21.2, above both the state of 20.4 and the nation of 21.0," said Kate Olin, the district's Director of Accountability and Assessment.

"This year, we experienced a 157 percent increase in the number of graduating seniors taking the ACT."

Olin said that district students who took the ACT in 2016 scored on average or slightly above the exam's benchmarks for science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, compared to district students and students across the state who

took the exam in 2015. The benchmarks predict how well prepared students are to succeed in college STEM courses.

District seniors who took the ACT in 2016 equalled the state's average STEM benchmark score of 18.8 but fell below the district average of 21.3 and the state average of 20.6 for 2015 graduates.

In 2016, the average math score for students meeting the benchmark was 28.4, compared to the state average of 28. The average science score for students meeting the benchmark in 2016 was 29.2 for the district, compared to 28.3 for the state.

The average math score for district students meeting the benchmark was 28.4 in 2016, compared to 28.1 in 2015. The average state score was 28 in both 2015 and 2016.

The average science score for district students meeting the benchmark was 29.2 in 2016, compared to 28.3 in 2015. The average state score was 28.3 in both 2015 and 2016.

"Although our composite scores in math and science are identical to the state's averages, we are encouraged that the scores of those students meeting the STEM benchmark exceeded the state average," Olin said.

"With testing changes impacting success indicators for many years, it's important that we are able to compare our own year-to-year data and that information from the assessments is rendered useful to students, families and the community as post-secondary plans are being made," the district's new Chief Officer of Instruction Dr. DeeDee Washington said.

In addition to the ACT, every student in Aiken County's class of 2016 was given the opportunity to have his or her career readiness measured

through WorkKeys, a job skills assessment system created by ACT that helps employers select, hire, train, develop and retain a high-performance workforce.

To earn an ACT certificate, an individual must complete three assessments, measuring a range of essential work skills, including the ability to perform basic math operations relevant to the workplace, read and understand documents commonly found in the workplace, find information presented in common workplace graphics, set up and solve complex work-related math problems, determine the relevance of written information to work-related tasks and apply information derived from graphics to work-related problems.

After taking WorkKeys assessments, individuals earn various levels of certification through a National Career Readiness Certificate, or NCRC, at the platinum, gold, silver or bronze level of skill mastery.

The NCRC is an industry-recog-

nized, portable, evidence-based credential that certifies the essential skills needed for workplace success. A growing number of business and industries in South Carolina use the WorkKeys assessment and NCRC certification for employment.

"All does mean all in Aiken County," Aiken County District Superintendent Dr. Sean Alford said. "All students deserve the opportunity to have their college and career-readiness measured and to explore continuing their education, as well as other post-secondary opportunities as viable options to their future success."

Alford added that "there is a renewed momentum throughout the state to ensure that our high schools are preparing students for more than a diploma."



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“That effort is certainly being realized here in Aiken County, where we are taking great responsibility to ensure that each graduate leaves us with a diploma and a documented plan for their future success through college admittance, the workforce or military

service,” he said.

South Carolina’s 2016 high school graduates also earned an overall composite score on the ACT below the average of states that require the test.

The ACT released its 2016 Condi-

tion of College and Career Readiness Report for the Class of 2016 on Thursday. South Carolina high school graduates earned an overall composite score of 18.5 compared to an average of 19.8 for the 20 states that require the test.

Title: **McMaster 'hoping to be in' next race for S.C. governor**
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McMaster 'hoping to be in' next race for S.C. governor

BY MEG KINNARD

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster all but announced he's running for governor again in two years, saying Thursday that he's "hoping to be in" the 2018 race.

McMaster's comments during a Facebook live broadcast with state GOP Chairman Matt Moore were the closest that the longtime Republican official has come to announcing his candidacy.

"I'd love to do it," McMaster said. "It's too early to announce anything. But I hope I'm going to be able to do it. ... I'm hoping to be in that race."

Filing for the governor's race doesn't open until early 2018. And by not committing to running, McMaster — the first elected official to officially endorse Donald Trump's candidacy — keeps himself open to possibly serving in a presidential administration, should Trump win in November.

McMaster, 69, is a former state attorney general, U.S. Attorney and state GOP chairman. Finishing third in a four-way Republican primary in the 2010 governor's race, he went on to back the eventual winner, Nikki Haley, who tapped him to head up her transition team, as well as an

ethics committee she created to make reform recommendations.

Haley was re-elected in 2014, and McMaster was elected separately to serve as her lieutenant governor. Going forward, starting in 2018, governor and lieutenant governor will be elected on the same ticket in South Carolina.

McMaster and Haley have worked together on a variety of issues but have clashed publicly over the presidential race. Haley initially backed Marco Rubio before saying she preferred Ted Cruz over Trump. Ultimately, she said she'll back the party's nominee but hasn't explicitly given an endorsement of Trump.

McMaster, on the other hand, threw his support behind the billionaire businessman at a rally before South Carolina's first-in-the-South primary, surprising many when he didn't back a more establishment candidate.

McMaster gave one of two speeches formally seconding Trump's nomination, saying at the convention last month that Trump was what the country needed to succeed.

"He is a man of uncommon strength, uncommon determination, accomplishment

and vision," McMaster said, of Trump. "He may be the only man perfectly equipped to win the ferocious battle ahead."

At South Carolina's Republican convention this spring, McMaster said Trump was the only candidate who could unite the country. Haley made no mention of Trump at all, instead going after the Republican-dominated Legislature for spending time and money on projects that benefit themselves and their home districts.

Many other Republicans have already been mentioned as potential candidates for South Carolina's 2018 governor's race, including Attorney General Alan Wilson and former Department of Health and Environmental Control director Catherine Templeton. State Rep. Tommy Pope, R-York, has already said he intends to run.

What do you think?

Comment on this story at www.aikenstandard.com, write to Opinions, *Aiken Standard*, Box 456, Aiken, S.C. 29802 or send an email to editorial@aiken-standard.com.

Title: **State ACT scores fall below average**
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State ACT scores fall below average

STAFF REPORTS

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South Carolina's 2016 high school graduates earned an overall composite score on the ACT national college admissions examination below the average of states that require the test.

The ACT released its 2016 Condition of College and Career Readiness Report for the Class of 2016 on Thursday. South Carolina high school graduates earned an overall composite score of 18.5 compared to an average of 19.8 for the 20 states that require the test.

The 2016 state high school graduates were the first to reflect the 100 percent participation requirement in college and career readiness testing. All 20 states that switched from a student-selected test to a state-required one experienced a similar decrease in scores in their first 100 percent testing cohort report, according to the education department.

"While we know we have a ways to go to meet our vision that every South Carolina graduate is prepared for college or career upon graduation, the ACT scores released today set a benchmark that we can build upon as we develop and implement an accountability system that incorporates multiple measures of college and

career readiness," S.C. State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman said.

The ACT consists of four subject area tests in English, mathematics, reading and science. A multiple-choice exam, the test questions on the ACT are directly related to what students have learned in high school in those four courses, according to the ACT website at act.org.

According to the Department of Education, South Carolina scores for meeting all four benchmarks dropped 8 percent from last year when the ACT was a self-selected senior cohort, but the test identified an overall increase of 1,369 students as "college ready" by ACT's metrics of meeting all four benchmarks.

ACT's benchmarks are rigorous targets that set a new high bar for South Carolina students and one that presents schools with significant opportunities to help students improve, according to the education department.

For example, 11 percent, or 5,620 students, scored within two points of meeting the benchmarks in English and reading, and 13 percent, or 6,642 students, scored within two points of meeting the science benchmark.

According to the release, the S.C. Department of Education is designing an accountability model based upon the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate that will incorporate a variety of college and career ready indicators to better inform students, parents and educators on the overall performance of schools.

The new accountability system will not use one stand-alone measure but rather multiple measures to determine levels of student preparation for

higher education and viable career options. The measures will include the ACT; WorkKeys, a work readiness test; Accuplacer, a two-year college entrance test; ASVAB, a military aptitude test; and the SAT exam, an aptitude test that predicts what students are capable of learning.

Additional indicators, such as the completion of career and technology courses in a recognized career cluster along with industry certifications earned while in high school, also will be reflected in the new model.

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley signed a law on May 30, 2014, directing that all high school juniors take the ACT and WorkKeys to identify college and career preparedness better beginning in the 2015-16 school year.