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Subject: Morning Clips – Tuesday, April 5, 2016

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Governor Nikki Haley News:

Post and Courier: Palmetto Sunrise: Pressure mounts on ethics debate, roads bill
<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160405/PC1603/160409714/1177/palmetto-sunrise-pressure-mounts-on-ethics-debate-roads-bill>

Gavin Jackson

The Senate is primed to begin debate on a House-approved ethics bill that would lead to significant oversight changes in the General Assembly. The bill would create an independent panel to lead investigations of potential misdeeds by lawmakers instead of having individual ethics committees for the House and Senate. Legislators would also have to reveal their public and private sources of income, though not how much they earned. Currently lawmakers only disclose public income and any money received from lobbyists. The debate comes amid a foundering investigation of state lawmakers that S.C. GOP Chairman Matt Moore said, “underscores the need for meaningful ethics reform in South Carolina.” Late Monday, Gov. Nikki Haley continued to pressure state senators on her Facebook page to vote for a clean ethics bill.

Note: “Do you deserve to know who pays your elected officials? Do they need to have independent investigations on ethics issues? Yes,” Haley posted Monday evening. “Tomorrow the Senate votes. We have fought for Ethics Reform for four years. If any of them attempt to amend the bill, they know they are killing Ethics Reform for the people of SC.”

Note: Haley stood by Grooms in a statement from her press secretary Chaney Adams. “Sen. Grooms is exactly right--if the House does not concur with the Senate the roads bill is dead this year. House members have a choice--they can vote to fix our roads, or they can kill two years of work and leave our roads exactly as they are today.”

Independent Mail: S.C. Senate to tackle ethics reform — again

<http://www.independentmail.com/news/sc-senate-to-tackle-ethics-reform--again-2faf95e2-2034-5c0e-e053-0100007fec6e-374541001.html>

Kirk Brown

The South Carolina Senate is slated to begin debating a bill this week that would change how ethics complaints against legislators are investigated and also strengthen income-disclosure requirements. This is the fourth consecutive year that members of the General Assembly have discussed overhauling the state's ethics laws. So far their efforts have failed to result in approval of any significant legislation. The latest push began when the state House of Representatives passed an ethics reform bill in January 2015 — three months after former House Speaker Bobby Harrell resigned and pleaded guilty to six counts of misusing campaign money.

Note: Senators refused to adopt the House measure last year, but Gov. Nikki Haley is urging them to act now on one of her top legislative priorities. “We'll continue to hear about ethics issues until we pass a real ethics bill,” said Haley in a post on her Facebook page last week. She told her followers that “we will be showing you the vote and attempts to kill the bill.”

General Assembly News:

Aiken Standard: Minority report holds up bill benefiting first responders

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160405/AIK0101/160409801>

Christina Cleveland

A Senate bill that would allow first responders suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder to receive workers' compensation benefits has been slowed due to a minority report. It's a Senate rule that is affecting between 50 and 60 bills, according to state lawmakers. A minority report can put on a bill by someone who voted against it at the committee level. It is a procedure that slows up the bill from being taken up for debate on the Senate floor. The workers' compensation bill, S. 429, primarily sponsored by Sen. Paul Thurmond, R-Charleston, has a companion House bill and would modify the requirements for first responders seeking workers' comp for personal injury caused by stress, mental injury or mental illness.

Sun News: Lawmakers pursue bill to ban sexual predators from locksmith industry

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/local/article69873137.html>

Audrey Hudson

The arrest of a local locksmith and registered sex offender on charges of molesting two children has prompted state lawmakers to begin drafting legislation to regulate the lock and key industry. State Sen. Greg Hembree and Rep. Greg Duckworth of North Myrtle Beach said Monday they plan to introduce companion measures in both chambers to address the lack of business requirements for locksmiths, which the recent arrest of Panteleimon "Peter" Spirakis brought to light. The revelation that Spirakis has twice before been convicted of sex offenses against minors in the last decade prompted calls from area locksmiths for the enactment of new business regulations that could include background checks for professionals in their industry.

SC Political News:

Post and Courier: S.C. Sens. Graham, Scott call on Supreme Court to block Obama immigration orders

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160404/PC1603/160409735>

Emma Dumain

Both of South Carolina's U.S. senators have signed on to a legal document urging the Supreme Court to bar implementation of President Barack Obama's 2014 immigration executive orders. Sens. Lindsey Graham and Tim Scott are among the 43 Senate Republicans who affixed their signatures to the amicus brief, an effort spearheaded by U.S. Sen. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. Graham, Scott and their colleagues contend that Obama went beyond his authority to extend legal status to, and defer deportation of certain undocumented immigrants and their families. They say he circumvented Congress by acting unilaterally to put the new policies in place. Obama counters he was within his right, especially given Congress's inability to pass its own comprehensive bill to overhaul the nation's immigration laws.

Wilson-Pascoe Dispute:

The State: Attorney general's deputy secretly tried to discredit special prosecutor

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article69941802.html>

John Monk

A top aide to Attorney General Alan Wilson explored ways to discredit special prosecutor David Pascoe personally, politically and professionally, according to emails obtained by The State newspaper. The aide, Wilson's deputy chief of staff Adam Piper, sent an email late last week to the chairman of the S.C. Republican Party, asking state chairman Matt Moore to consider using the state Republican Party to besmirch Pascoe. Pascoe, a Democrat, was appointed by Republican Wilson to investigate allegations of criminal wrongdoing by legislators at the GOP-controlled State House. However, last week, Wilson said he was firing Pascoe. The email gives a rare glimpse into how political operatives plot no-holds-barred strategies as controversies unfold involving top political officials.

Post and Courier: Texts, emails show AG aide plotted with GOP consultants before news conference over Pascoe

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160404/PC16/160409776>

Glenn Smith and Tony Bartelme

A chief aide of S.C. Attorney General Alan Wilson apparently plotted with high-powered Republican consultants before last week's fiery news conference in which Wilson torched David Pascoe — his own special prosecutor — texts and emails obtained by The Post and Courier show. The emails and texts are the latest twist in a high-stakes probe over money, influence and ethics at the Statehouse. The drama began with the investigation that brought down former House Speaker Bobby Harrell in 2014. As part of that investigation, the State Law Enforcement Division reportedly uncovered information about other lawmakers. A portion of SLED's report has been made public, but sections believed to describe the lawmakers were heavily redacted.

Savannah River Site News:

Aiken Standard: DOE takes another step in process to find Savannah River Site liquid waste services contractor

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160404/AIK0101/160409780>

Dede Biles

The U.S. Department of Energy, which is seeking a contractor to provide liquid waste services at Savannah River Site, recently took another step in the process by issuing a draft request for proposal, or draft RFP. Savannah River Remediation, or SRR, holds the current liquid waste services contract at Savannah River Site, or SRS. That agreement expires June 30, 2017. According to a March 31 news release, the draft RFP includes "requirements for meaningful work to be performed by small business concerns." The total estimated value of the contract is "up to" approximately \$6 billion "over the prospective period of performance of up to 10 years, including the option period." The purpose of the draft RFP is to get input from interested parties to assist the Department of Energy in developing a final RFP. One-on-one meetings with interested parties will be held the week of April 18, according to the news release.

Aiken Standard: Defense Waste Processing Facility marks twenty years of vitrification

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160405/AIK0101/160409797>

A little more than 20 years ago, the first high-level waste at Savannah River Site, or SRS, was converted into glass. The nation's only operating vitrification facility, the Defense Waste Processing Facility, or DWPF, has been the steady and reliable workhorse of liquid waste operations at SRS. DWPF has been safely treating the high-level liquid waste at the U.S. Department of Energy facility since radioactive operations began in March, 1996. The first radioactive canister was then poured that April. DWPF poured its 4,000th canister of vitrified waste Dec. 31, 2015. Savannah River

Remediation, or SRR, operates DWPF, as well as other liquid waste facilities at SRS, as part of its contract with DOE. Operations are expected to continue at DWPF for approximately 20 more years and about 4,000 more canisters are scheduled to be produced.

Opinion/Editorial:

The State: Scoppe: A way forward in Wilson-Pascoe standoff

<http://www.thestate.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/cindi-ross-scoppe/article69865107.html>

Editorial: Cindi Ross Scoppe

My resolution would start with Mr. Pascoe saying, "I misunderstood the law, and as a result I assumed that the attorney general had dishonest motives when he removed me from the case, so I did what I thought I needed to do to preserve the integrity of this investigation. I am withdrawing my petitions to the Supreme Court and asking Mr. Wilson to do what he says he was willing to do on Good Friday: Sign the paperwork to properly initiate a State Grand Jury investigation that I would then oversee." And Mr. Wilson would need to accept the apology. I asked Mr. Wilson if he would do that, and he said he would have to seriously consider it. But then he said his problem isn't simply that he doesn't trust Mr. Pascoe; the larger problem is that he believes Mr. Pascoe tainted his own ability to prosecute the case with what Mr. Wilson calls deceptive claims in his Supreme Court petitions.

The Herald: SC editorials: Police shootings, corruption probe, prescription epidemic

<http://www.heraldonline.com/opinion/state-opinion/article69972902.html>

A \$2.15 million settlement between the family of Zachary Hammond and the city of Seneca provides a measure of closure for the Hammond family, but as they said in a news conference this past week, the settlement closes just one chapter of the tragic case... What shouldn't be lost in this ongoing turf dispute is the seriousness of the matter under review. The current investigation is an outgrowth of SLED's 2014 probe into Mr. Harrell's misuse of campaign funds. SLED cited possible ethics violations by other legislators, whose names were not released... What was once a growing problem has become a national epidemic: prescription drug abuse. ...

South Carolina News:

Associated Press: Hearings set in 2 cases in Charleston church shooting

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:d89c9e64b6124cc6b32500bd5a04c923>

Bruce Smith

A federal judge is holding hearings in two cases stemming from the shooting deaths of nine parishioners at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel on Tuesday discusses with attorneys the status of the cases against both Dylann Roof and Joey Meek. No date for either trial is set. Roof, who faces nine counts of murder in state court, is charged with hate crimes and other counts in federal court. Federal prosecutors haven't said if they'll seek the death penalty. The state is seeking death in Roof's state trial set for July. The other case before Gergel involves Roof's friend, Meek. Prosecutors have charged him with not telling investigators all he knew about Roof's plans for last June's shootings.

Post and Courier : With death penalty decision looming, federal judge to take up Dylann Roof case

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160405/PC16/160409747>

Andrew Knapp

Last year, a federal judge in Charleston urged prosecutors to announce whether they will seek the death penalty against Dylann Roof, the man accused of the deadly mass shooting at Emanuel AME

Church. Months have passed since then without a decision from Attorney General Loretta Lynch's office in Washington. With that key announcement still hanging, attorneys in the case will gather at 10 a.m. Tuesday for a hearing in the downtown U.S. District Court. Judge Richard Gergel, who had encouraged prosecutors to reveal their intentions by February, also will hear updates on the prosecution of Joey Meek, the friend accused of not alerting authorities of Roof's scheme before the June 17 attack was carried out.

Associated Press : 1 year since death of man shot while running from police

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

SC State Wire

The family of a black man shot to death by a white police officer while running away is marking the one year that has passed since his death. Walter Scott's family is holding a moment of silence at his gravesite Monday, according to local media reports. The family says that Scott's mother, brother and other relatives will lay flowers on his grave and address the media. Former North Charleston officer Michael Slager is charged with murder in the April 4, 2015, death of the 50-year-old Scott, who was running from a traffic stop. In January, Slager, 34, was allowed to leave jail after posting bond and is under house arrest at an undisclosed location in South Carolina. His trial is scheduled for later this year, and Slager faces 30 years to life without parole if convicted of murder.

Greenville News: National study reports injustice in state's lower courts

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/crime/2016/04/04/national-study-reports-injustice-states-lower-courts/82606462/>

Tim Smith

Many defendants in South Carolina's lower courts are not advised of their constitutional rights, trials are held without any lawyer present in the courtroom and those found guilty are sometimes given the choice of paying a fine they cannot afford or going to jail, in effect creating a debtors' prison, a national study of the state's magistrate and municipal courts has found. South Carolina has about 319 magistrates and about 200 municipal courts, called summary courts, according to the state's judicial website, that handle misdemeanor charges ranging from traffic violations to shoplifting and drug possession. The report paints a bleak picture of what can happen to poor and unrepresented defendants in the state's lower courts, where often no lawyer is present, cases are sometimes prosecuted by police and thousands face criminal charges that can send them to jail for 30 days with a criminal record.

Associated Press: South Carolina railroad to unveil new line to Volvo factory

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=FDzGdEz1

SC State Wire

South Carolina's state-owned railroad is planning to build a 10-mile rail line to the site of the \$500 million Volvo factory that's currently under construction in Berkeley County, about 30 miles northwest of Charleston. The Post and Courier of Charleston (<http://bit.ly/1q2wE5f>) reports Palmetto Railways, a short-line carrier run by the state Commerce Department, hopes to have the line running to Camp Hall Commerce Park in 2019, a year after the Swedish automaker is expected to open its first U.S. manufacturing facility. The state says it hopes the rail line also will help drum up more interest in manufacturing development in the industrial park.

Post and Courier: South Carolina railroad to unveil new line to Volvo's Berkeley County factory

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160404/PC05/160409734>

Thad Moore

South Carolina's state-owned railroad plans to build a 10-mile rail line to the site of the Volvo factory, one of a handful of projects meant to ready the region for the Swedish automaker and other companies that might set up shop near the plant. Palmetto Railways, a short-line carrier run by the state Commerce Department, says it hopes to have the new line running to Camp Hall Commerce Park in 2019, a year after Volvo is expected to open its first U.S. manufacturing facility along U.S. Interstate 26 in Berkeley County. Palmetto Railways will build, own and operate the rail line. The cost has not been determined, nor has what the agency called "a preferred route" for the tracks.

Associated Press: School choice nonprofit accused of illegally giving grants

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=ty473Ami

SC State Wire

A nonprofit that distributes scholarships to children with disabilities violated state law and faced being booted from South Carolina's private school tuition program, according to a Department of Revenue audit. The audit accused Palmetto Kids First Scholarship Program of having a quid pro quo arrangement with donors, The State newspaper reported (<http://bit.ly/1UE2mTu>). It found that every parent who donated to the group and requested a scholarship in 2014 received tuition help - about 60 in all. It also found some donors broke tax rules by getting scholarships and claiming a dollar-for-dollar tax credit, potentially reducing their tax bill as much as \$10,000. A Senate panel will consider further revising the private school choice law. Legislators did not intend for people to profit from it, said Sen. Wes Hayes, R-Rock Hill. The Legislature approved the limited program in 2014 after a decade of opposition to the idea of using tax credits to help parents pay private tuition. Changes made last year gave parents a way to benefit without the nonprofits, allowing those who pay tuition upfront to receive a refund of up to \$10,000 through tax credits.

Local News:

Post and Courier: Walter Scott family, community activists call for more change on anniversary of shooting

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20160404/PC16/160409749>

Melissa Boughton

Walter Scott's death at the hands of a North Charleston police officer should serve as the foundation for all police abuse cases across the nation, according to one of the family's attorneys. Chris Stewart, standing a few feet from where the 50-year-old's body is buried, said Monday that many examples have been set in the last year by the family, the city of North Charleston and the state Legislature. He and attorney Justin Bamberg gathered with many of Scott's family members at his gravesite at Live Oak Memorial Gardens to mark the first anniversary of his shooting death. Bamberg and Scott's brother, Anthony, addressed some of the changes they have seen as a result of the police shooting, such as body camera legislation and a decrease in North Charleston traffic stops but said there is more work to be done.

Aiken Standard: Aiken officers at center of federal lawsuit 'temporarily reassigned' pending external review

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160404/AIK0101/160409790>

Maayan Schechter

Four Aiken police officers at the center of a federal civil rights lawsuit alleging an officer unconstitutionally performed a public cavity search in broad daylight in 2014 have been put on "temporary reassignment" pending an external investigation. City leaders met with local leaders of Aiken's black community Friday, hours after news broke that two Aiken County residents, Elijah

Pontoon and Lakey Hicks, were suing Aiken Public Safety officers Chris Medlin, Clark Smith, Brian Hall and Penny Schultz; in addition to the Aiken Department of Public Safety, its Chief Charles Barranco and the City of Aiken in federal court. In a statement provided to the Aiken Standard on Monday, the police agency said the traffic stop of Pontoon and Hicks was "legal," as it was part of an ongoing narcotics investigation.

The State: Dynamite disposal scheduled in Lexington County

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article69962982.html#storylink=apmobile>

Noah Feit

The Lexington County Sheriff's Department will be working with the State Law Enforcement Division and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Tuesday morning to safely dispose of 400 pounds of dynamite. The disposal will feature dozens of loud blasts near Caney Branch Road in Leesville starting mid-morning, and could continue through most of the day and evening, said Lexington Public Information Officer Capt. Adam Myrick, who added Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians have selected a detonation site that won't impact nearby homes, beyond the sound. Capt. Myrick said discoveries of old dynamite aren't uncommon in Lexington County where explosives have been used in mining, agriculture and construction for decades.

Greenville News: Simpsonville police chief not back at work; council votes to take action

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/2016/04/04/simpsonville-police-chief-not-back-work-council-votes-take-action/82607856/>

Nathaniel Cary

After a marathon executive session that lasted more than four-and-a-half hours, Simpsonville City Council voted Monday to take an action that was discussed in executive session, but to the dismay of an overflow crowd, the council refused to name the action it planned to take toward its suspended police chief Keith Grounsell. The non-answer threw the room into a frenzy as nearly 100 residents tried to make sense of the vote as several of the council members quickly packed up and left through a back door. Following the meeting, Councilman Matthew Gooch said Grounsell and City Administrator David Dyrhaug were meeting to discuss the action and that Dyrhaug would be the only person who would answer questions about the matter. They emerged at 8:38 p.m. to a weary room still mostly full. Several people clapped and Mayor Janice Curtis bowed. But moments later, the room would be thrown into confusion.

The Herald: Inmate litter cleanup returns to Chester County

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/article69888707.html>

Teddy Kulmala

An old concept for litter control has come back to Chester County. The county recently resumed its inmate litter detail, through which several inmates from the Chester County Detention Center go out a few days a week and pick up trash along county roadways. "We've been planning for this since April of last year," County Supervisor Shane Stuart said. "It's only recently we've able to act on it." The county once maintained an inmate litter detail, but it ended during a longstanding dispute between then-County Supervisor Carlisle Roddey, whom Stuart unseated in the 2014 election, and Sheriff Alex Underwood. Stuart said he began looking into restarting the program after residents voiced concern last year about trash on the county's roadways.

Independent Mail: New director chosen for state social services agency's Anderson County office

<http://www.independentmail.com/news/new-director-chosen-for-state-social-services-agencys-anderson-county-office-2faf95e2-2036-5c0e-e053-374548821.html>

Kirk Brown

Nikita Harrison was named Monday as director of the South Carolina Department of Social Services office in Anderson County. Harrison has served as director of the agency's Pickens County office since 2012. She will start work April 18 in Anderson, and an interim director will be named for the office in Pickens County later this week, said Karen Wingo, director of communications and legislative affairs for the Social Services Department. Harrison will take over for Crystal Sanders, who served as interim head of the Anderson County office since former director Glenn Farrow retired in September. Sanders applied for the county director's post but was not selected for the job. In her new position, Harrison will lead an office where caseworkers have been burdened with the highest caseloads in the state.

The Herald: 105 new jobs coming to Fort Mill

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/business/article69871817.html>

For the second time in just more than a year, an automotive supplier has announced plans for a multi-million expansion that is expected to create more than 100 new jobs in York County. Schaeffler Group said Monday it would create 105 new jobs with a \$36.5 million expansion at its Fort Mill campus on Springhill Farm Road. That site is also the headquarters for the company's American operations. Plans call for an additional corporate building, expansion of one of the company's two manufacturing plants and a reworked plant entrance to accommodate growth and increase in traffic. Hiring for the new positions is expected to begin sometime around April 2017.

Sun News: Myrtle Beach ocean outfall project expected to wrap up by May

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/local/article69922662.html>

Emily Weaver

A crane, pipes and other heavy equipment rested motionless on a barge anchored off the coast at Fourth Avenue North in Myrtle Beach Friday evening – the remnants of a deepwater ocean outfall project, earmarked for completion last November, that is now set to be done by May. “The contractor still has to install over 400 feet of pipe. The trench has been prepared and it is just a matter of placing and aligning the pipe,” said Ron Andrews, assistant city manager. All work on the project was initially scheduled to wrap up Nov. 24, but bouts of heavy rains, storms and rough seas last fall pushed the completion date to Dec. 23. The date was pushed back again when more problems struck.

Aiken Standard : Masters Week provides economic boom for Aiken

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20160404/AIK0101/160409779>

Dan Brown

As much as Aiken loves to dress up for the Triple Crown, the three weeks in March that sound the call of spring, the big economic benefit comes during Masters Week. It's all about the green during the first week of April – Masters green – as Aiken gears up for its biggest week of economic boom of the year. Hotels are booked for the week as visitors converge on the CSRA. The airport is busier than any other week, handling up to 50 incoming flights a day. And it's just getting started. Aiken's Accommodation Tax Supervisor Jenny Burghardt said Masters Week is the annual economic boost the area looks forward to.

Island Packet: Forbes names Bluffton to list of top 25 retirement destinations

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/business/article69885097.html>

Lucas High

Forbes magazine recently named Bluffton one of the nation's top 25 places to retire. There are a host of factors that go into the magazine's rankings, but weather is a major one, Forbes contributor William

Barrett said Monday. While Bluffton was the only South Carolina town named to the list, 14 of the top 25 retirement destinations are in the Southeast. The mild winters in the region allow retirees to enjoy golf, tennis and other popular outdoor activities nearly year round, local retirement planner and financial adviser Danielle Jeffcoat said Monday. Like most of life's other major decisions, money plays a role in where people choose to retire.

National News:

Associated Press: Uncertainties shadow California plan for nation-leading wage

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:7ce0b51c4a0f4c7c8b9ca0664c5c7c0e>

Michael R. Blood and Don Thompson

California's decision to push its statewide minimum wage to a nation-leading \$15 comes with uncertainties that could see the pay jumps postponed if the economy sours or the state budget slumps, while the overall goal of helping the working poor might be lessened if some employers cut jobs or, worse, leave the state. With Congress deadlocked on sweetening the federal minimum wage, California on Monday stepped in. Under a law signed by Gov. Jerry Brown, the state will bump its \$10 hourly minimum by 50 cents next year, and to \$11 in 2018. Hourly \$1 raises will then come every January until 2022. Businesses with 25 or fewer employees have an extra year to comply; wages will rise with inflation each year thereafter. But after the first 50-cent step-up, there's a catch. The governor can suspend a planned increase if job growth retreats and retail sales tank. And a delay could also kick in — up to two times — if the state is facing a serious budget crisis.

Associated Press: GOP appeal to conservatives with health care, immigrant cuts

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:59a71e912bc545a6a913d058529c62ef>

Andrew Taylor

Trying to win over conservatives, House Republicans are sweetening their budget proposal by putting several programs on the chopping block, including President Barack Obama's health care law and tax credits for children of immigrants living in the country illegally. But cuts to programs like food stamps are on hold and a drive to cap medical malpractice awards has faltered before a GOP-controlled committee, though cuts to Medicaid and a popular program that provides health coverage to children have advanced through a panel responsible for federal health programs. Still, it may not be enough. And if the party's broader budget plan sinks, the effort may fade. The strategy behind the work is to increase support for the budget, a nonbinding measure that sets a more than \$1.1 trillion overall cap next fiscal year for the operating budgets of federal agencies. Beyond the appropriations cap, the measure calls for sweeping spending cuts to benefit programs like Medicaid, the health care law, and food stamps.

World News:

Associated Press: Panama rejects money-launder label following documents leak

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:3b6b5a9dd980448f992657d14ca8b6bd>

Juan Zamorano and Joshua Goodman

Panamanians have long shrugged off their country's checkered reputation as a financial haven for drug lords, tax dodgers and corrupt oligarchs. If they're crooks, they've learned from the world's wealthy nations, they like to joke. That same defensiveness has re-emerged amid the fallout from the leak of 11.5 million confidential documents from the Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca revealing details of how some of the globe's richest people funnel their assets into secretive shell companies set up here and in other lightly regulated jurisdictions. Ramon Fonseca, a co-founder of

the firm, said Monday that his country's success in establishing itself as an offshore banking giant has bred jealousy from first-world rivals at a time of increasing competition and scrutiny of the industry in the aftermath of the global financial crisis.

Associated Press: Nations scramble to contain offshore account report fallout

<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:9776afab519d40b48a23678b4c7ca518>

Governments around the world scrambled Tuesday to contain the fallout from the publication of thousands of names of rich and powerful people who conducted offshore financial activity through a Panamanian law firm. China dismissed as "groundless" reports that relatives of current and retired politicians, including President Xi Jinping, own offshore companies. The state media are ignoring the reports, and search results for the words "Panama documents" have been blocked on websites and social media. Iceland's prime minister has vowed to not resign despite thousands of angry protesters demanded he step down and call new elections after the leaks showed possible links to an offshore company that could represent a serious conflict of interest. And Ukraine's president was accused of abusing his office and of tax evasion by moving his candy business offshore, possibly depriving the country of millions of dollars in taxes.

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