

Title: **Bikefest: It's great to be here**  
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# *Bikefest: It's great to be here*

*A Different  
Perspective*

As far as I know, the Rev. Al Sharpton has not rented out an entire North Myrtle Beach hotel to fill it with protesters to be unleashed on the streets of Myrtle Beach during the Atlantic Beach Memorial Day Bikefest this weekend.

What would Sharpton be heading to Myrtle Beach to protest?

And how could he afford to rent out an entire hotel in one of the nation's top tourism destinations during the tourism season? Who

knows? Conspiracy theories don't leave much room for details or logic.

It was comical at first to keep getting messages through email and Facebook about all sorts of Bikefest rumors, like the one about Sharpton, as well as having earnest people ask me about them while I've been out and

about in Myrtle Beach this week.

After a while, though, it became depressing, for it illustrates people's dark expectations about this weekend.

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## **BAILEY**

*From Page 3A*

I won't dwell on that, though. As I said last week, this isn't the time to push myth or misperception or rumors, or even debate the merits of the plans Myrtle Beach and Horry County officials have put in place.

I'm just hoping that what area leaders have done will work well, that law enforcement officials will be stern but courteous, that Bikefest participants and other tourists enjoy the place and show residents they love and respect this area as much as we do.



ISSAC J.  
**BAILEY**

It's time to focus on what each of us can do as individuals to make this weekend a success.

Each person has to figure out how best to do that. Christ Community Church in Conway is having a 24-hour prayer, and I'm certain Bikefest will come up during at least a few of those hours.

A group of churches — HOPE, Centenary United Methodist, and Cedar Branch Missionary Baptist — is sponsoring an interfaith bike blessing and "Bike Unity Ride" at 6:30 p.m. Thursday

at Carolina Forest Elementary School.

There are other such groups and individuals, including those who will be members of the revamped "Friendship Teams."

For the next few days, it would be wiser to listen to those kinds of folks — those who have committed to positive action — than those who would rather focus on spreading rumor and innuendo.

Maybe you don't pray. That's fine.

You don't have to pray to assure that the rumor mill doesn't run through you.

A few years ago, a political controversy erupted when Gov. Nikki Haley implement-

ed a policy that had all state employees who answered the phone use this greeting: "It's a great day to be in South Carolina. How can I help?"

Her critics said there were too many problems in the state to sound so upbeat. I defended her because I know attitude has a real effect on behavior.

Being mired in the negative won't help us this weekend.

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Title: **BEYOND THE BARRICADES**  
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BY DERRICK BRACEY  
*For The Surge*

There have been plenty of words said and written about the shootings during last May's Memorial Day weekend and Atlantic Beach Bikefest.

But since last year, new words and phrases have entered our national lexicon – Ferguson, Black Lives Matter and I Can't Breathe. Names like Freddie Gray and Walter Scott have become common in daily discussions. More often than not, these discussions exist in a bubble, devoid of historical perspective or the logistics involved before and after an incident occurs.

This is not one of those discussions.

This discussion takes you into the history of Atlantic Beach, leading up to last year's debacle, and heads into this year's event on the Grand Strand. This discussion will also take a deeper look at color – the color green – the color of money.

#### **"If You Don't Know Me By Now" - A Brief History of Atlantic Beach**

The little swatch of land known as Atlantic Beach was originally developed by the descendants of Gullah Geechee

slaves.

"It all started in 1934, when George W. Tyson, a black businessman from Conway, bought 47 acres of land from a white landowner named R.V. Ward for \$2,000," says Sherry Suttles, author of "Images of America: Atlantic Beach" and one-time president of the Atlantic Beach Historical Society. "It was the height of segregation and the depression. Some more people put their pennies together, and they got a place of their own."

After buying the land, Tyson built the Black Hawk Night Club. Other black landowners and business people bought and developed the four-block area of Atlantic Beach. Motels, restaurants, shops and night clubs sprang up. A couple of years later, the Intracoastal Waterway was built, pouring in commercial shipping and leisure boating.

Atlantic Beach came to be known as The Black Pearl – 128 acres of prime real estate, welcoming those that no one else would. It thrived in the '40s, '50s and early '60s. Black families vacationed in droves.

Entertainers like Count Basie, Ray Charles, Billie Hol-

day, James Brown, Martha and the Vandellas, Bo Diddley and Otis Redding played the Jim Crow south in surrounding white clubs, but they stayed in the segregated beach town and played after-hours shows at Atlantic Beach's Cotton Club, Black Magic Club, Hawk's Nest or

one of the other clubs of the time.

But the lines of segregation were always blaring. On the northern and southern borders of Atlantic Beach, property owners ran ropes out into ocean and posted signs for blacks to stay off of their beach. Fences and walls were put up and refortified over the years to barricade the city.

"Then, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 Act were passed and legal segregation stopped. Black people could stay anywhere they wanted on the beach," says Suttles. "Atlantic Beach incorporated in 1966, and it's gone downhill ever since."

The ropes and segregation signs fell, but Atlantic Beach has opted to not annex into North Myrtle Beach. Since its

inception, it seems The Black Pearl has adopted an 'us against the world' mentality. But maybe, on occasion, it's been The Black Pearl against The Black Pearl, too. A lack of resources and civic services, paired with government corruption, has given Atlantic Beach a crumbling infrastructure and a bad reputation.

Over the years, local TV coverage is filled with a cavalcade of police officers, town administrators, council members and mayors being brought up on charges of driving under the influence and

drug distribution and election fraud and bribery.

And let's not forget former Mayor Retha Pierce, whose title and rap sheet should be enough to garner the attention of reality show producers. During her stint as mayor and after, she's been arrested for third-degree assault and battery against an Atlantic Beach town council member, driving under the influence, resisting arrest, reckless driving, trespassing and hit-and-run.

Paul Curry has a very litigious history with Atlantic Beach. He lived there from 2002 to 2012. Curry contests

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that three of the five current council members are legitimate. He's filed multiple lawsuits against the town. The court has ordered the town to apologize to him in one instance. He's been accused of harassment by Atlantic Beach, and he even got into an altercation with Town Manager Benny Webb in Town Hall over the Freedom of Information Act. The tussle ended with Webb being convicted of third degree assault and battery in 2013.

Curry began living in a one-room apartment in Atlantic Beach when he was down on his luck and says he's bothered by seeing people "getting their rights stomped on by landlords and the corrupt government."

For the last 40 years, outside developers have tried to come in and revitalize the dilapidated township. But distrust of outsiders runs deep.

"I won't lay all the blame on city management. Nor do I think the developers should be faulted," says Suttles. "Everyone has their motivations. Everyone is pulling in different directions. They restrict developers until nothing is viable. The people there just can't get it together."

But to look at Atlantic Beach, you can feel the decay from the top down. Crime rates soar. Population plummets.

"They think they have a divine right to exist, and everyone should be obligated to help them," says Curry. "It's a town whose time has passed."

Tiffany Gerald grew up in Atlantic Beach. After years of her husband's urging, she finally moved to North Myrtle Beach. She grew up there. She misses it, but believes it's impossible to get ahead while living there.

"The government and the landowners there are like crabs," says Gerald. "When one gets ahead, the others just

pull them back down."

Today, these few self-segregated blocks are one of the poorest communities in South Carolina. The golden age is long gone for this oceanfront property. Only 350 permanent residents remain with a

household median income of a little more than \$24,000. The average per capita income is only \$12,492. The surrounding Grand Strand only grows grander as The Black Pearl sinks deeper in debt.

### "Fantastic Voyage" - A Rundown of Bikefest

But let's back up a minute - back to 1980, when a lightning strike of an idea came into fruition - Atlantic Beach Bikefest was launched on Memorial Day weekend to compete with the already entrenched Harley-Davidson spring rally. Harley riders had used the month of May to rally in Myrtle Beach since the 1940s.

"The bike rally started as a way to generate funds for Atlantic Beach. Black bikers were already going to the other rally," says Suttles. "It started with hundreds of bikers, then thousands, then hundreds of thousands. It became too much, and the surrounding beaches got the overflow."

The streets soon filled with food and merchandise vendors. Bikers rolled into town, and along with them came tricked-out cars and anyone else looking for a party. The town did make money, but it wasn't a game-changer. After the expense and promotional costs, Bikefest makes up less than 10 percent of Atlantic Beach's total income.

The Grand Strand rapidly found out it wasn't prepared for back-to-back rallies filled with noisy parties, bumper-to-bumper traffic, general rowdiness and the violence usually accompanying masses of people and alcohol.

"With more people came more headaches and violence," says Suttles. "All of that gets blamed on Atlantic Beach."

"It's a crazy event, but Atlantic Beach does a great job coordinating the festival with the assistance of other law enforcement agencies," says Benny Webb, former Atlantic Beach town manager and retired SLED agent. "They never had any major problems until the festival spilled over into Myrtle Beach. But what else are you going to do? Atlantic Beach can't hold 250,000 people."

Almost from the beginning, Myrtle Beach tried to push the event back out of city limits. But why? Is it because minorities become the majority for one weekend? Is it because white people are forced to come face-to-face with black culture? Is the populous of the Grand Strand really terrified of hip-hop music and revealing bikinis on the backs of bikes?

In the '90s, some Grand Strand politicians and business owners rallied to control the festival with the National Guard. A few businesses started to close over the weekend. Traffic rerouting and looping began on Ocean Boulevard.

"The more welcoming we are the fewer problems we'll have. We welcome the money, but we don't welcome them," says Shai David, owner of the Oasis Motel in Myrtle Beach. "It's a large volume of people having a good time. Let's accommodate this important part of our economical ecosystem with more trash cans and port-a-potties."

In 2003, in a bid to ban Atlantic Beach Bikefest in Myrtle Beach, Mayor Mark McBride compared Bikefest with the Harley rally by saying, "Black Bike Week is rowdier, younger and much more crowded."

"Bikefest crowds in Atlantic

Beach are always well-behaved. They're actually an ol-

der crowd, mixed with younger people," says Webb. "A lot of the same people have been coming to this thing since it began. I've met some of the nicest people at the festival."

But lines were drawn. Problems continued in 2003 when several black bikers joined the South Carolina chapter of the NAACP to sue the restaurants that closed during Memorial Day weekend and the City of Myrtle Beach for discrimination. The NAACP called the suits "Operation Bike Week Justice." The NAACP won all the federal discrimination suits.

"At one point, Myrtle Beach tried to buyout the rally so they could cancel it," says Suttles. "But the [Atlantic Beach Town] council refused."

Bikefest raged on and in 2008, a Coastal Carolina University student was shot. Apparently, bikers weren't involved, but the tragedy was used as a red herring to pass ordinances targeting bike rallies - ordinances involving loitering in downtown parking lots, loud muffler noise, harsher vendor restrictions in city limits, and the highly contested helmet law.

Court hearings ensued over the ordinances and most of them, including the helmet law, were reversed. Harley riders took the hint and moved on to surrounding beach towns. But black bikers and their friends still gather, still party, still bring their money to Myrtle Beach.

Curry believes Atlantic Beach Bikefest should be billed as an "outdoor bizarre for counterfeit goods" because of raids in the last three years, resulting in arrests and the confiscation of thousands of dollars in knockoff products.

"I'd estimate 75 percent of the vendors are selling counterfeit goods," says Curry. "DVDs, CDs, purses, per-

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fumes, sunglasses, cellphone covers, NFL gear, sneakers – they sell all kinds of illegal stuff.”

More trouble boiled up in the last two years. Six bikers died in traffic accidents in 2013. Then the catastrophe of 2014 – eight shootings occurred on Ocean Boulevard – seven people were injured and a triple homicide occurred near Bermuda Sands motel.

Atlantic Beach Bikefest and Myrtle Beach became a national news story and prompted Gov. Nikki Haley to travel to Horry County on May 30 and announce, “It is time for Bikefest to come to an end, and that is the way that I am going to talk to the elected officials of Atlantic Beach.”

Haley addressed Atlantic Beach town council last July. Atlantic Beach Mayor Jake Evans publicly called Haley’s comments, “just politics.” He also made sure everyone knew, “We didn’t have any problems in Atlantic Beach. Everybody abides by the laws. Why can’t they do the same in Myrtle Beach?”

At a September summit, Haley addressed a room full of South Carolina law enforcement officers. “I just wish we could get more respect and involvement out of the people in Atlantic Beach. I’ve gone and talked to their council. ...We’ve gotten nothing,” she said. “If you see all of these other communities working so hard to keep the area safe it would really be nice if the city of Atlantic Beach would step up and say, ‘You know what? We have a role to play in all this and we should step up and do something.’”

Atlantic Beach Town Manager William Booker responded at the same summit by saying, “We’re willing to work together. We don’t want to see any more of these tragic events in our area.”

Booker was terminated in November, because his job

performance was “not favorable.” But even without Booker, there’s no intention of Atlantic Beach ever caving in on Bikefest.

And Haley finally relented like an exhausted parent, “They can continue to have Bikefest if they follow our rules.”

Haley’s language even denotes separation – notice the “our” in her statement. She doesn’t say “the” rules but “our” rules, as if they’re not everyone’s rules.

“What bike week has grown into isn’t all positive, but we feel like most of the riff-raff has gone to Myrtle Beach, and good riddance to that,” says Gerald. “We know the police everywhere are working long hours and jumping through hoops, and we want them to

stop the crime and lock up the bad guys just like everybody else does.”

But what if Atlantic Beach did cancel Bikefest? Are the bikers and partiers going to stop coming? And why would Atlantic Beach trade 35 years of tradition because of an isolated incident in another city?

“I love the energy of Atlantic Beach during Bikefest,” says Suttles. “It’s like a great street fair.”

“Every bike week, I go back to those same four streets,” says Gerald. “It’s always the same. The same vendors, the same people come back. We catch up every year. It’s like a reunion.”

And in Myrtle Beach, it’s become economically ingrained. A lot of business owners we talked to didn’t want to go on the record, but most agreed that you can’t bitch on the way to the bank.

#### **“No Money No Problems” - Funds Generated from Calamity**

After last year’s bike week, emergency council meetings

were called. Community gatherings were called. People

came together to solve the “problem.”

“We need to get away from this mentality of generalizing an issue. We can’t let isolated incidents and fear change the way we think,” says David. “I’ve never had any problems with Bikefest. The money I make carries my business to mid-June. To take an economical opportunity like this away because of noise and trash would be foolish.”

“The [Myrtle Beach] city council addressed the issue and got a lot of community support,” says Mark Kruea, public information officer for the city of Myrtle Beach.

The support came in the form of increased funds raised from additional property taxes, hospitality fees, short-term leasing fees and the reshuffling of budgets. The results are an estimated \$4.1 million to be spent over the next two or three years.

What does four million bucks get you this Memorial Day weekend? For starters, it

covers 200 body cameras for the Myrtle Beach police officers, 9,600 pedestrian and vehicular barricades, an on-street surveillance camera and operating system (125 cameras are already recording on 60 blocks of Ocean Boulevard), 500 additional police officers and overtime to cover the extra Atlantic Beach Bikefest traffic and other stuff like traffic cones and message boards.

“We have more trouble with white kids coming in here and stealing than we’ve ever had during Bikefest,” says Gary Finkenbinder, owner of Kilgor Trouts Music and More in Myrtle Beach. “Myrtle Beach has a year-round crime problem.”

In answer to that, Kruea is quick to point out, “There was a need to take advantage of this new technology that has year-round uses. Even if the first time we use these new

tools are on Memorial [Day] weekend, we now have them in our toolbox.”

One of these first-time uses will culminate in a massive

23-mile loop to direct traffic. The loop goes in effect from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. May 22 to 24 and acts as a vein, pumping traffic along 29th Avenue North to Ocean Boulevard south to Kings Highway to Harrelson Boulevard to George Bishop Parkway to Waccamaw Boulevard, onto S.C. 31 heading north to Grissom Parkway south, then back to U.S. 17 Bypass and down 29th Avenue North.

“The traffic will be evaluated at 2 a.m.,” says Lieutenant Raul Denis, public information officer for the Horry County Police Department. “If it’s still too heavy, we’ll extend the loop’s hours.”

The plan brings back a dedicated emergency lane, which Myrtle Beach stopped using in 2008. Strategically placed emergency vehicles will have access to Ocean Boulevard 24 hours a day all weekend. Emergency vehicles will also be stacked all over Horry County.

Because of Atlantic Beach’s limited two-person police force, about 20 SLED officers and highway patrol officers will help enforce the packed streets. Just like the last 10 years, a traffic chute will be put in place at the entrance to the Atlantic Beach Bikefest at 30th Avenue South from May 22 to 25.

“I’m glad they’re taking steps to get ready for Bikefest, because last year, there weren’t any police to be found,” says Finkenbinder. “There were accidents and people lying in the middle of the street. It took hours for emergency vehicles to respond. I was scared, not because I was surrounded by black people but because it was crazy.”

But the main purpose of the

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loop is to keep people moving, to avoid clotting, aka socializing, aka partying on the streets.

"We're not going to be the Gestapo out there, but we are going to enforce the laws," says Denis. "Problems come from large congregations of people, so if people start gathering in parking lots, they'll be told to move along."

"A 24-hour street party isn't a desirable traffic component," says Kruea. "The loop only runs 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. be-

cause midnight tends to be the peak." When we ask about the party component, he quickly adds, "Turning a private parking lot into a public party will also not be allowed."

We're not sure how effective these measures will be when thousands of people are collecting in one place to meet and party.

"It's just the Myrtle Beach psychology that everyone is coming here to cruise," says Finkenbinder. "They just don't know how to entertain black people, so they give them a traffic lazy river."

"I'm going to lose thousands of dollars in business because this loop blocks off the streets," says David. "And these barricades are dangerous. I've seen it in New York City on New Year's Eve. They block in people like cattle. They'll be injuries and deaths if something does happen."

But Suttles agrees with the new approach, saying, "The

best you can do is try to control the traffic and the parties from getting out of hand."

"The loop will also cause problems with GPS," says David. "Streets are cut off. People won't be able to find their way around in the maze."

Many believe by separating pedestrians from vehicles, and keeping social discourse clogged on certain sidewalks or shuffled along the loop may cause disconnection with the city where they're vacationing.

"The problem with the loop is businesses like mine are completely blocked in," says Finkenbinder. "Nobody's coming in or getting out of the middle of the loop all weekend."

"The city is concentrating the small percent of troublemakers instead of the 99 percent of good people coming to have a good time and spend millions of dollars," says David.

But in Atlantic Beach, visitors will be greeted by a banner reading, "Welcome." Under this warm message will be a temporary phone number for anyone who needs police assistance.

Bumped-up numbers of police officers allow for smaller areas patrolled and for more crowds interacted with. It's up to police, tourists, business owners and locals to make

these interactions count.

Timothy Taylor has only

been the police chief of Atlantic Beach for nine months, and he's been planning for Bikefest for the last six or seven months.

"I anticipate a lot of large crowds, and expect all of us to be respectful, to interact and to get along," he says. "I'm looking for everyone to be on their best behavior."

It seems to be a case of preparing for the worst but hoping for the best with an estimated 110 officers patrolling the small patch of Atlantic Beach throughout the day. "They can come down here and have a good time on vacation," says Taylor. "Or they can cause problems and leave on probation."

Along with Myrtle Beach's new body cameras and surveillance system, the city also spent \$140,000 for a SkyWatch surveillance tower last fall. SkyWatch is a climate-controlled room made for two with four surveillance cameras and two spotlights that can be lifted in the 25 feet in the sky. SkyWatch will also be in full effect on Memorial Day weekend.

"It's nice to have the equipment, but if people want to commit crimes, it doesn't matter how many cameras you have. They're a deterrent, not a guarantee," says David. "I just hope that the police aren't inside monitoring cameras when they could be out on the streets preventing it."

Right now, Horry County of-

ficers aren't equipped with body cameras. There are plans to include them into future budgets, but in the meantime, they do have an armored vehicle.

"That thing is staying in the garage," says Denis. "It would take an extreme circumstance to bring it out."

Good, because the state of the nation and the tragedies of last Atlantic Beach Bikefest call for tolerance and understanding on all sides. That reputation is probably more important to the Grand Strand than the fear of a police state in the protection of the tourism economy.

"We can always be more inviting and accommodating," says David. "This is a free city, not a prison."

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## GOP EVENT

# Presidential forum set for SC in the fall

By ANDREW SHAIN  
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Gov. Nikki Haley and former U.S. Sen. Jim DeMint will lead a 2016 Republican presidential candidate forum Sept. 18 in Greenville. The State has learned.

The forum at Bon Secours Wellness Arena likely will attract the top GOP candidates trying to woo S.C. voters before the state's first-in-the-South primary, the third Republican contest of the 2016 election cycle.

No details were released on which candidates will

be invited.

The forum will be held by Heritage Action for America, the political arm of the Heritage Foundation, which DeMint runs.

"Instead of 'gotcha questions' or the usual political fights, we will discuss solutions on issues that matter to families like education, health care, energy, foreign policy and more," said DeMint, who held a forum for GOP presidential candidates in Columbia in

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## FORUM

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2012, when he was still a U.S. senator.

Heritage Action is working to score candidates in the 2016 presidential race this summer on issues — ranging from unions to defense spending to religious freedom — in what it's calling a Presidential Platform Index. GOP candidates also are vying for Haley's endorsement. The Lexington Republican has not endorsed a 2016 favorite. In 2012, Haley endorsed eventual Republican presi-

dential nominee Mitt Romney but he nonetheless lost the S.C. primary.

The forum will not be a debate. The Republican National Committee has worked to restrict the number of debates in the 2016 election cycle to 12 after holding 20 in 2012.

Instead, the candidates are expected to appear on stage one at a time.

"South Carolina voters want to hear from each candidate personally about the most important issues — from health care to jobs and the economy — facing the states and our nation," Haley said in a statement.

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## Haley needs to learn how to play well with others

Most politicians, if they expect to get anything done, are solicitous of those with whom they must work. Gov. Nikki Haley offers a contrasting, and lamentable, *modus operandi*. It is not leadership; it is condescension. She should be extending to legislators — and working to earn for herself — respect. Instead, she expresses contempt (by, for example, suggesting that people visiting the General Assembly might need to take a shower afterward).

And while some of those to whom she condescends may at times deserve public opprobrium, Haley could have expressed that without becoming governor with far fewer adverse consequences to the cause of responsible governing and to the relationship between the executive and legislative branches. Serving as governor, however, calls for a different approach, something of a higher order, something more professional — something more resembling constructive leadership. Frankly, something more mature and realistic.

Gov. Haley, in her characteristic adamant way, suggests that the Legislature is supposed to be with her, as if legislators should capitulate unconditionally to her wishes. It all sounds darkly ma-

gisterial on her part. But the reality is that South Carolina is a legislative state, and as much as I or Gov. Haley would like to establish a better balance of power between the executive and legislative branches, that is not going to happen via Gov. Haley's tactics. She needs to accept the status quo and work with lawmakers to do good things for the state and its people.

Most S.C. governors, of necessity, came to terms with that unbalanced relationship — all the while working to change that balance — and most could still cite significant success during their tenures, in spite of the office's institutional weaknesses. Gov. Haley's tactics and rhetoric could actually set back the case for an enhanced executive authority, because to the degree that such a change is associated with the governor in power, the manner in which that governor handles the power and authority she has will influence legislative votes one way or the other.

Gov. Haley's is a self-aggrandizing style, and that does not serve the cause of enhanced executive authority well at all. Neither will it render the best policy options for the future of South Carolina, because it precludes the give-and-take necessary for good policy-making.

EDWIN F. "CHIP" BROWN JR.  
Conway



**Brown**

Title: **Body camera proposal on hold**

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# Body camera proposal on hold

BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN  
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COLUMBIA — State senators disagreed Wednesday with the changes the House made to a bill equipping more South Carolina law enforcement officers with body cameras, leaving the proposal in limbo until the differences can be worked out.

Last week, the House amended then passed a Senate bill that calls for body cameras for all law enforcement officers. But the Senate wasn't in favor of the changes made to their bill.

The current draft of the bill — renamed after Walter Scott who was shot in the back while fleeing a North Charleston police officer — gives the state six

months to study the use of police body cameras and then allows another six months to put it into practice. The Senate bill calls for quicker action. Members of both chambers will have to hammer out their differences in a yet-to-be scheduled conference committee, before the bill can be sent to Gov. Nikki Haley's desk for her signature.

Title: **New trustees say S.C. State has 'huge, huge' problems**  
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# New trustees say S.C. State has 'huge, huge' problems

BY DEANNA PAN  
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Members of the new interim board of trustees at South Carolina State University pledged more oversight at the embattled historically black college when they convened for the first time Wednesday.

Gov. Nikki Haley and other state officials appointed the seven-member board of trustees earlier this month to turn things around at the state's only historically black public university. The trustees, who are slated to serve through June 30, 2018, elected Charleston real estate developer Charlie Way chairman of the board and former AT&T executive James Clark vice chair.

"We all know South Carolina State has got some problems. It's got some huge, huge problems," Way said at the outset of the meeting at the university's Orangeburg campus. "As my father used to say, this ox is in the ditch and we're here to get this ox out of the ditch."

Over the past several years, S.C. State has weathered management problems, financial shortfalls, leadership turnover,



## Poll

Do you think the new SC State University Board of Trustees will be able to get the school back on track? Go to [postandcourier.com/polls](http://postandcourier.com/polls) to vote.

declining enrollment, a corruption scandal in addition to threats of closure and loss of accreditation.

According to a presentation from accountant Tom McNeish of the Elliott Davis Decosimo accounting firm, S.C. State owes almost \$20 million in short-term obligations to its creditors, including \$6 million to the state from an emergency loan approved in April. That loan is expected to be paid back at the end of June.

"We've got a major budget deficit and cash flow problems," acting President W. Franklin Evans admitted at Wednesday's meeting. "We've certainly got to do things differently."

Vice chair Clark questioned whether the measures the university already has taken to reduce its deficit, including its spending and hiring freeze, per-

sonnel and budget reductions and employee furlough program, have been strong enough.

"The corrective actions do not appear to be in keeping with the downsizing in students," Clark told Evans. "I hope you'll prove me wrong."

Last summer, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges accreditation agency placed S.C. State on probation, the agency's most serious sanction, due to the university's financial difficulties. On June 9, S.C. State will have to make its case before the regional agency's board in order to keep its accreditation intact.

In an interview with The Post and Courier, Charleston entrepreneur and trustee Steve Swanson, said the biggest issue S.C. State faces isn't its finances, but its troubled public perception.

"We're certainly not here to close the school down. We're here to get the school back on track. We're here to do what's necessary to make those changes," Swanson said. "Every option has to be on the table."

Reach **Deanna Pan**  
 at 937-5764.

Title: **Agency votes toraise five Cabinet directors' salaries by total of \$62,000**

Author:

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# Agency votes to raise five Cabinet directors' salaries by total of \$62,000

**COLUMBIA** | Five of Gov. Nikki Haley's Cabinet directors will collectively see their salaries increase by about \$62,000, as per the Republican governor's recommendations.

The Agency Head Salary Commission on Tuesday set salaries for six of Haley's appointees who were confirmed by the Senate this year.

Only the salary for the Department of Revenue's director remains unchanged at \$153,000. Rick Reames, confirmed in March, had been acting director since last July.

The approved increases range from less than \$4,300 to nearly \$27,000. Each followed Haley's recommendation letters to the panel. None gave any specific rationale.

The last paragraph of each said the director is "well suited for the position, and the salary request is in line with" her or

his "experience and demonstrated qualifications."

She told The Associated Press she leaves such decisions to the agency.

"There is one thing I don't get involved in, and it's that," she said.

The following salaries take effect immediately:

- \$159,130 to Medicaid director Christian Soura, an increase of \$4,251
- \$159,130 to Susan Alford, director of the Department of Social Services, an increase of \$4,251
- \$127,907 to Juvenile Justice director Sylvia Murray, an increase of \$9,362
- \$124,973 to Richele Taylor, director of the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, an increase of \$17,328
- \$124,676 to Jerry Adger, director of the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon

Services, an increase of \$26,556.

The commission also approved the salary range for new positions created by last year's government restructuring law, which was seen as a huge victory for Haley.

The law divided the duties of the Budget and Control Board, which will officially cease to exist July 1. Its director, Marcia Adams, currently makes nearly \$193,000.

Most of that agency's duties will transfer to the new, Cabinet-level Department of Administration, which Adams will also lead.

Other duties transfer to the new State Fiscal Accountability Authority.

Adam's new salary will range between \$185,500 and \$287,500. The authority director's salary will range between \$166,100 and \$257,500, according to ranges

recommended by the salary panel's outside consulting firm.

Senate President Pro Tem Hugh Leatherman, the panel's chairman, noted the state's supposed to be saving money through the restructuring bill.

Haley must recommend a salary within the approved ranges.

Being in charge of fewer people doesn't necessarily mean a director should make less money, she said. She said it's about responsibilities.

"When you look at a director, especially the Department of Administration, you're looking at an agency where we haven't seen all that it is going to do yet. I hope it takes on a lot of responsibilities. I hope they really see this as taking all the back office procedures of the agencies so they can focus on their missions," Haley said.

Title: **House committee: Cell phone tax bill dead for this year**  
 Author: TIM SMITH STAFF WRITER TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM  
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# House committee: Cell phone tax bill dead for this year

**TIM SMITH**

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**COLUMBIA** — A bill that would levy a tax on cell phone users for a landline fund is dead for the year.

Rep. Bill Sandifer, a Seneca Republican and chairman of the House Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee, told *The Greenville News* on Wednesday that he has decided to keep the bill in committee instead of forcing a vote to

send it to the House floor. His comments came a week after the panel narrowly voted not to recommit the legislation to a subcommittee, keeping it alive.

Sandifer said he made the decision not to try and move the bill to the floor of the House after consulting with the chairman of the subcommittee that gave the bill a favorable report last week.

"We determined that because of all the turmoil and this being late in the session with very few days left, that it was better just to leave it in adjourned debate status," he said. "We can put it on the full committee agenda at another time in the

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## Phone

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future, but I do not anticipate it coming out this year."

The Legislature is expected to adjourn for the year on June 4.

Last week Sandifer, who supports the bill, had talked after a committee meeting about trying to get the bill passed by his panel this week and sent to the House floor.

The committee was divided on the issue and one lawmaker said the legislation was opposed by Gov. Nikki Haley.

Rep. Ralph Norman, a Rock Hill Republican, said then he wanted more time to understand the bill and wanted a chance to have "disinterested" parties provide more information to committee members.

The focus of the legislation, which passed the Senate last month, is the state version of the Universal Service Fund, a fund mandated by the federal government in 1997 to help provide equal, af-

fordable access to telecommunication services.

The legislation would make wireless customers pay a percentage of their bill — between 1.1 and 1.3 percent — for the fund and cap the fund at the current amount, \$42 million.

The state version of the fund pays subsidies to companies that provide service to high-cost, hard-to-reach rural areas. It also provides discounts to low-income residents for basic phone service. Carriers, known officially as "carriers of last resort," must agree to charge no more to provide service to landline users in hard-to-reach areas than they do for urban phone users.

Landline phone users have long paid into the fund through a tax on their monthly bills and currently pay 2.65 percent. And cell users already pay a federal tax for the fund. But as fewer people have chosen landlines and more have chosen cell service, revenue in the South Carolina fund

has dropped.

Expanding the number of people who pay into the fund would drop the tax rate for landline customers, who number about 1.1 million in the state compared to more than 4 million wireless users.

Wireless company executives have said the legislation does not hold carriers who use the fund accountable, offers a permanent subsidy for older technology and creates a new tax without providing a new benefit.

In making his decision, Sandifer said he also had to gauge the prospects for passing the bill in his committee and before the full House.

"I don't think we're there yet," he said. "A lot of people don't understand what it actually does. One of the problems is that bill has a lot of moving parts. And you might grasp one but you don't grasp two more. It's important that they (supporters) do their homework to educate members as to what's really going on with the bill."

Title: **Gulf spill sickened, killed 46 dolphins**  
 Author: BY BO PETERSEN [bopete@postandcourier.com](mailto:bopete@postandcourier.com)  
 Size: 71.92 square inch  
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# Gulf spill sickened, killed 46 dolphins

Findings come amid  
S.C. drilling debate

BY BO PETERSEN  
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Forty-six dolphins found stranded on Gulf state beaches died from bacterial pneumonia, adrenal disease and lung lesions caused by pollutants from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, a federal study of the strandings

has concluded.

The study gives more firepower to environmental groups as regulators work through approvals to open Lowcountry offshore water to seismic gun testing and drilling for potential oil and natural gas reserves. Industry spokespeople have argued that the work can be

conducted while ensuring the safety of marine animals. The issue cuts to the heart of coastal life, where people appear to largely support curbing exploration to protect marine life and a billion-dollar tourism economy.

Please see **DOLPHINS**, Page A8

## Spill sickened, killed 46 dolphins

**DOLPHINS**, from A1

Most state political figures and others support exploring for potential economic benefits, even though the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management has concluded that the work "may result in low immediate economic benefits for nearby communities."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration examined "fresh dead" bottlenose dolphins that stranded from 2010 to 2014 during what researcher call an "unusual mortality event," an abrupt increase in the number of dead dolphins found.

"These dolphins had some of the most severe lung lesions I have ever seen," said Kathleen Colegrove, lead veterinary pathologist in study.

"The dolphins were swimming in oil," said Stephanie Venn-Watson, National Marine Mammal Foundation, the lead author. The deaths occurred from 2010 to 2014 in the Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama waters "most heavily oiled" by the spill,

she said. "While the number (of stranded dolphins found) may seem low, it's a high number in the dolphin world."

Other feasible causes of the diseases and lesions were eliminated in the study, Venn-Watson said.

"Since 2010, a number of new safety and environmental standards have been put in place,

and the industry has invested billions in new spill-prevention and containment technologies and equipment, making energy development safer now than it has ever been," said Nicolette Nye, spokeswoman for the National Ocean Industries Association, an offshore energy industry advocate.

"Ocean industries — including energy development, tourism and fishing — and the natural environment have all thrived alongside each other for decades," she added.

The study's findings are incredibly alarming but not surprising, said South Carolina Coastal Conservation League program director Katie Zimmerman.

She referred to federal and state studies that found Lowcountry dolphins and other sea life have been made sick absorbing man-made contaminants.

"Dolphins in this ecosystem may be even more susceptible to disturbance in their habitat, given the high percentage of the population that has been considered compromised in health,"

Zimmerman said.

"Bottlenose dolphins in Charleston are a sentinel species and provide information on the overall health of the environment. Along with the dolphin population, Charleston's human population of residents and tourists rely heavily on the waterways for recreation, work, and sustenance," she said.

Zimmerman called on decision-makers to be "cognizant of the irreparable and horrific damage he or she would be allowing by approving seismic testing leading to offshore drilling."

More than 50 coastal municipalities and organizations so far have opposed exploration and drilling in the Atlantic Ocean, in-

cluding at least 18 in South Carolina. U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford, R-S.C., also has publicly come out in opposition. But Gov. Nikki Haley, as well as the majority of state and congressional lawmakers, have publicly supported the testing. Nearly 100,000 dolphins were believed to be roaming offshore or inshore off Atlantic states before a lethal virus struck in the past two years. More than 1,500 have turned up dead, including more than 150 here.

The virus now appears to be waning, but scientists are watching closely as waters warm and migrating pods move.

Reach **Bo Petersen** at 937-5744, @bopete on twitter or Bo Petersen Reporting on Facebook.



### Poll

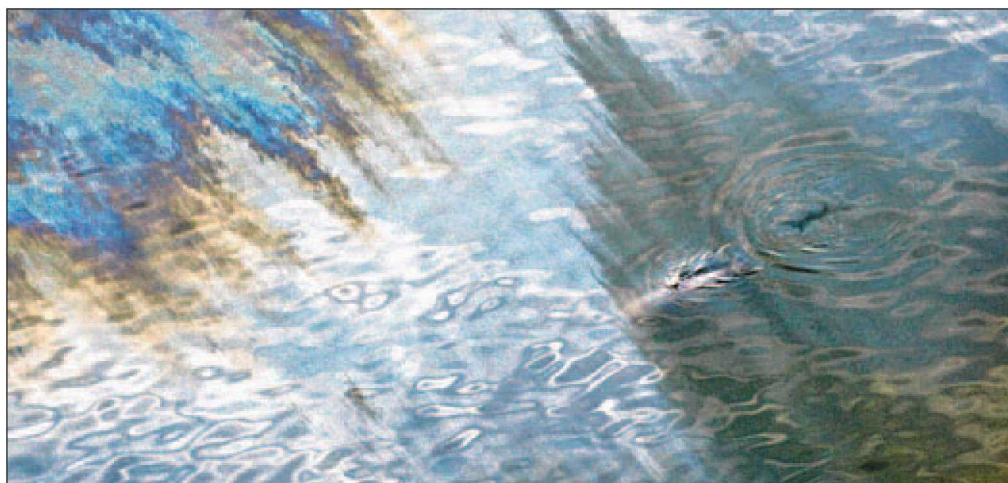
Do you believe that testing and drilling for oil and natural gas offshore can be done in a way that poses no increased danger to marine life? Go to [postandcourier.com/polls](http://postandcourier.com/polls) to vote.

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FILE/CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/AP

**A dolphin swims in the Barataria Bay near oil from the Deepwater Horizon spill off Grand Isle, La., in 2010.**



GERALD HERBERT/AP

**A dolphin is seen swimming through an oil sheen from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill off East Grand Terre Island, where the Gulf of Mexico meets Barataria Bay, on the Louisiana coast in 2010.**

Title: **S.C. House approves giving AG greater state grand jury authority**  
 Author: BY JEREMY BORDEN [jborden@postandcourier.com](mailto:jborden@postandcourier.com)  
 Size: 16.43 square inch  
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# S.C. House approves giving AG greater state grand jury authority

BY JEREMY BORDEN  
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COLUMBIA— The S.C. House passed a measure Wednesday that gives the attorney general greater authority to investigate public corruption and other crimes using the state grand jury.

The measure removes a requirement that a circuit judge must approve the use of the grand jury. A judge would still have to be notified.

Wilson had sought to use the state grand jury to examine



**Wilson**

former House Speaker Bobby Harrell's campaign expenses in a celebrated ethics case last year. Harrell challenged Wilson's authority, and after lengthy legal proceedings the investigation was moved to another prosecutor and Harrell pleaded guilty and resigned.

"Recent events have pointed

to the reality that we need various ethics and judicial reform measures to ensure that independent criminal investigations can proceed with public confidence," Wilson said in a statement. "This bill provides much-needed updates to our state grand jury system."

The bill has already passed the Senate but requires another vote in the House before moving to Gov. Nikki Haley for approval.

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