

Title: **Report from your Representative**

Author:

Size: 67.27 square inch

Batesburg-Leesville, SC Circulation: 3651



Report from your Representative

This week in Columbia we hit the ground running strengthening our gun laws, streamlining government, and continuing our work in legislative subcommittees.

Protecting Gun Rights

Due to a recent South Carolina Supreme Court decision, we had to go back and apply a fix to an existing statute pertaining to the Stand Your Ground law. The fix sets forth the judicial procedure to assert the Castle Doctrine defense. It also strengthens the existing Castle Doctrine which includes provisions that prohibit criminals from using a Stand Your Ground defense while committing a crime. The measure is strongly backed by the pro-second amendment National Rifle Association and it passed the House unanimously.

Senate Roads Debate

A month into the 2016 legislative calendar state senators are no closer to finding a way to fix South Carolina's crumbling roads but they spent hours this week arguing over their inability to officially debate the issue. The Senate Majority Leader criticized his colleagues for "dilly-dallying." That prompted a debate on what's blocking progress.

Many Republicans believe Senate legislation that provides for increase funding for roads, must also include tax relief for citizens and reform of SCDOT. Gov. Haley has pledged to veto any legislation that increases gas taxes without cutting income taxes and restructuring DOT. Most Democrats argue it's not necessary to link the three issues

in one bill and they just want to raise the gas tax. The debate continues in the Senate as the House waits their action.

Devils Backbone Road

On a local note, I have spent much time working with DOT officials to increase the priority of the repair to Devils Backbone Road at Barr Pond. This is a matter of great importance to our community; the bridge has been out since the October floods and necessitates emergency medical personnel, school busses, and residents to

an extensive detour while this road remains closed. This is costing tax payers increased funds in the operation of our school bus system as well as preventing EMS from providing timely service to citizens when an emergency arises. I have been assured that this road will be repaired in the near future.

SC House Won't Waste Time & Money

The S.C. House of Representatives will take off the week of Feb. 15 in an effort to make its case that the 6-month-long legislative session should be shortened. Nearly all major legislation has been passed by the House and awaits Senate action. The week of unpaid furlough will save SC taxpayers about \$77,000.

Virginia Reverses Course on CWP

SC Concealed Weapons Permit (CWP) holders will still be able to carry legally in Virginia. This news story also gives an update on our legislative initiative to get CWP reciprocity with Georgia.

Tightening SC's Eminent Domain Law

This week, a Senate Subcommittee approved an amended version of S.828 regulating any attempt by a petroleum pipeline company when it tried to exercise eminent domain to run a pipeline through an owner's property. This legislation does not allow private, for-profit pipeline companies, including publicly-traded, for-profit companies that are not public utilities to exercise eminent domain to install pipelines.

Other Statehouse News in Brief...

Supreme Court Judge Elected: The House and Senate met in joint session and elected the newest justice on South Carolina's Supreme Court. Judge John Few is the first new justice tapped to the state's highest court since 2009.

Qualifying Magistrates: The House approved and sent the Senate H.4665, a bill that calls for Magistrate candidates to be screened by the Judicial Merit Selection Commission (like all other judges) to ensure that the candidates meet the qualifications for the office.

Next in Line: The House voted to clarify a 2014 statewide constitutional amendment that allows the governor and lieutenant governor to run on the same ticket. H.4579 allows the governor to assign duties to the lieutenant governor, very similar to the functional relationship between the president and vice president.

Saving Lives: The House

concurred in Senate amendments to H.3145, a bill that would give legal protection to those who take actions to prevent hot car deaths.

Mugshot Extortion: The House and Senate adopted compromises on S.255 that establishes new provisions to stop websites from demanding payment to remove booking photographs and other booking records of those arrested in SC.

Renewable Energy Income Tax Credits: The House concurred with a Senate amendment to H.3874 that provides for an income tax credit to a taxpayer who constructs, purchases, or leases and places into service large-scale, nonresidential, solar energy equipment.

Statehouse Prayer Rally

There was a Prayer Rally at the Statehouse this past Tuesday (Feb. 9th) at noon. It was led by Dr. Franklin Graham who is traveling to all 50 state capitols with the simple message to pray, vote and engage on the local, state and national levels. At this critical juncture in America, I can't imagine a more vital and timely moment to call on God for guidance. HE is in control, not man or politicians. I will proudly stand with Franklin Graham in praying that GOD will intercede and show us the way to put America back on the path of being a beacon of liberty and high moral values for the world to follow."

I'm Available

It is an honor and a privilege to serve you. If you need assis-

Title: **Report from your Representative**

Author:

Size: 67.27 square inch

Batesburg-Leesville, SC Circulation: 3651

tance navigating state government, or have any thoughts or concerns about what we are doing, please do not hesitate to contact me at 803-315-4621. As always, it is a privilege

and honor to be you Representative in the SC House.

Yours in Service,
Ralph Shealy Kennedy



Dear Friends:

Title: **S.C.'s new domestic violence gun law is hard to track in court**
 Author: BY JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press
 Size: 28.05 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



S.C.'s new domestic violence gun law is hard to track in court

BY JEFFREY COLLINS

Associated Press

South Carolina lawmakers passed a law last year banning some people convicted of domestic violence from owning guns.

But the state's antiquated court records system could prevent advocates from tracking how it is working.

Last year, Democrats and Republicans came together to pass the law giving a

lifetime gun ban for the worst abusers and an automatic three- or 10-year ban in other serious cases.

But in the least serious third-degree domestic violence cases, whether someone convicted of the crime can keep or buy guns is left up to the judge. Advocates fighting domestic violence want to know how often a judge rules to take away guns, but is struggling to collect data, said Sara Barber, executive director of the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

"We can't tell how well the law is working if we can't tell how judges are using their discretion,"

Barber said.

A domestic violence task force created by Gov. Nikki Haley determined that 62 percent of domestic violence cases in South Carolina end with a not guilty verdict. But the database is so disjointed, that it is impossible to know if the defendants in those cases were found not guilty, accepted a plea bargain to a lesser charge or the charges were dropped. It is also difficult to sort the data by a criminal charge without a defendant's name.

"When the governor signs a bill it isn't over," Barber said. "A lot of times implementation is the tougher part."

Solicitor Duffie Stone, who prosecutes criminal cases for six Lowcountry counties, said the new law provides prosecutors with another tool that can solve the reporting problems – all cases can be tried in General Sessions court, the highest trial level court with a much better system to track records, instead of by a

lower-level magistrate.

"It also sends a message to the offender to be tried in the same court as a murderer or rapist, instead of where someone went 55 (mph) in a 35," Stone said.

Advocates said overall the 2015 law is a big step in a state that has long ignored a dangerous problem. FBI data obtained by The Associated Press shows 230 people have died in domestic violence shootings in South Carolina from 2006 to 2015. Only five other states reported more deaths, and four of them have twice the population of South Carolina.

The law did more than ban guns. It also increased penalties for repeat domestic violence offenders based on the severity of the attack, the number of prior offenses and other factors, like whether the victim was strangled, is pregnant or was abused with children nearby. It replaces an old system that based punishment mostly on the number of offenses.

Title: **Gun law is hard to track in court**
 Author: BY JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press
 Size: 26.04 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE GUN LAW

Gun law is hard to track in court

BY JEFFREY COLLINS

Associated Press

South Carolina lawmakers passed a law last year banning some people convicted of domestic violence from owning guns.

But the state's antiquated court records system could prevent advocates from tracking how it is working.

Last year, Democrats and Republicans came together to pass the law giving a lifetime gun ban for the worst abusers and an automatic three- or 10-year ban in other serious cases.

But in the least serious third-degree domestic violence cases, whether someone convicted of the crime can keep or buy guns is left up to the judge. Advocates

fighting domestic violence want to know how often a judge rules to take away guns, but is struggling to collect data, said Sara Barber, executive director of the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

"We can't tell how well the law is working if we can't tell how judges are using their discretion," Barber said.

A domestic violence task force created by Gov. Nikki Haley determined that 62 percent of domestic violence cases in

SEE LAW, 7A

LAW

FROM PAGE 3A

South Carolina end with a not guilty verdict. But the database is so disjointed, that it is impossible to know if the defendants in those cases were found not guilty, accepted a plea bargain to a lesser charge or the charges were dropped. It is also difficult to sort the data by a criminal charge without a defendant's name.

"When the governor signs a bill it isn't over," Barber said. "A lot of times implementation is the tougher part."

Solicitor Duffie Stone, who prosecutes criminal cases for six

Lowcountry counties, said the new law provides prosecutors with another tool that can solve the reporting problems – all cases can be tried in General Sessions court, the highest trial level court with a much better system to track records, instead of by a lower-level magistrate.

"It also sends a message to the offender to be tried in the same court as a murderer or rapist, instead of where someone went 55 (mph) in a 35," Stone said.

Advocates said overall the 2015 law is a big step in a state that has long ignored a dangerous problem.

Title: **Haley should open probe of Orangeburg Massacre**
 Author:
 Size: 66.65 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

Haley should open probe of Orangeburg Massacre

From her backroom relationships with corporations and negotiating business deals that undermine state businesses to criticizing her own party and her leadership in bringing down the Confederate flag, Gov. Nikki Haley has been a controversial and courageous governor.

If the governor wants to crown her historic governorship, she can commit to another courageous and

bold act: Open an official investigation into the Orangeburg Massacre.

This tragic event occurred Feb. 8, 1968, on the campus of the then-S.C. State College. Three students were killed and 27 others wounded on the third night of growing tension over the refusal of the town's only bowling alley to allow black patrons. Nine highway patrolmen had been issued deadly buckshot and giv-

ing authority to fire into a crowd of students if they felt their lives were being threatened.

The officers were acquitted of imposing summary justice, and then-Gov. Robert McNair blamed "black power" influences for this tragic event. Cleveland Sellers, a civil rights activist, was the only person jailed. Twenty-five years later, he received a full pardon. He now serves as presi-

dent of Voorhees College in Denmark.

If three students were killed and 27 wounded at the University of South Carolina or Clemson University in 1968, do you think there would not have been a full investigation and someone held accountable?

Truth and reconciliation could lead to a brighter day in South Carolina.

- Dwight Donald
Simpsonville

Have your say

Send letters, of up to 250 words, to **stateeditor@thestate.com**. If you don't have access to email, you may mail them to Letters, The State, P.O. Box 1333, Columbia, SC, 29202. Include your full name, street address and day and evening phone numbers.

Guest columns of up to 700 words should be sent to **cscope@thestate.com**. They should address state or local topics, demonstrate authority and knowledge of the topic and make persuasive, information-backed arguments.

All submissions will be edited. All submissions must be exclusive to The State and become the property of The State.

Title: **Haley should open probe of Orangeburg Massacre**

Author:

Size: 66.65 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



FLE PHOTO/THE STATE

A ceremony is held annually to commemorate the Orangeburg Massacre, but the state has not gone back and undertaken a thorough investigation.



SEAN RAYFORD Associated Press

Gov. Nikki Haley delivers the 2016 State of the State address to a joint session of the General Assembly.

Title: **Haley needs to match actions to words**

Author:

Size: 8.83 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Haley needs to match actions to words

First, Gov. Nikki Haley encouraged our legislators to work together to make our state a better place for all. Then a few minutes later, she told those same legislators that unless they approved her road plan, she would veto their bill. In other words, do what I say or else. How's that for working together?

Then, while talking about bringing us all together, she proposed a tax cut of \$55 million to 379 wealthy South Carolinians and nothing — yes, zero — to 1.1 million South Carolinians who don't earn enough to file income taxes, but do pay the gas tax. Now, that's really working for all of South Carolina, right?

Instead, I trust and hope that our legislators and the governor will come together as Gov. Haley requested in her speech with an equitable and moral tax plan to fund our infrastructure and the education of our children.

*- Stan Frick
Columbia*

Title: **South end fire station taking shape**
 Author: BY ANGELA NICHOLAS For TheSun News
 Size: 43.4 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



South end fire station taking shape

BY ANGELA NICHOLAS
 For The Sun News

It has been a long time coming but by year's end, Murrells Inlet-Garden City Fire District station No. 79 will be ready to respond to the needs of residents living in the rapidly growing Burgess community of southeastern Horry County.

Breaking ground Friday for construction of the 4,100-square-foot station marked the end of a long struggle to increase fire

coverage in the area. The project was hindered in 2014 when Gov. Nikki Haley vetoed a tax bill that had successfully worked its way through the South Carolina legislature. The governor said at the time she vetoed the bill "because I believe the taxpayers deserve a chance to vote on tax increases."

Murrells Inlet-Garden City District Fire Chief Nor-

man Knight said the veto pushed the effort back to the beginning.

"We started the process to get the tax millage raised around 2007 when we identified a need for a fourth station in the area," Knight said prior to the groundbreaking. He said the same process was being followed that was used in 1992, when the tax rate was successfully doubled from the 5 mills

established when the fire district was organized in 1966.

"Fast forward to 2007-'08 when we recognized that a rapidly growing district required more money to operate off of," Knight said. The fire district proposed an increase to 14 mills.

He said when the idea of

SEE FIRE, 3C

FIRE

FROM PAGE 1C

increasing the millage was initially taken to the legislature, they were encouraged to put off the request due to economic conditions at that time.

"If we had known then that [the governor] felt it was a tax increase that people in the district should have a say in, we would have had a referendum earlier," Knight said.

Success finally came when a special referendum was held in March 2015 and voters overwhelmingly supported the increase. The 14 mills, Knight said, would add only about \$16 a year in taxes to a home valued at \$100,000.

That increase will provide 24-hour fire and EMS coverage for rapidly growing neighborhoods along McDowell Shortcut Road and

Tournament Boulevard to S.C. 707.

"The addition of a fourth fire station in our district will put every resident within about 3 to 3.5 miles of a fire station," Knight said. "That's pretty strong. It will help with response time and availability of equipment."

The \$1.2 million, three-bay fire station will be the fourth to serve the district that is uniquely split between Horry and Georgetown counties. The tax increase will also support the cost of a \$400,000 fire truck and an estimated \$200,000 in staffing for house 79 that will include three firefighters and a two-person medic unit per shift. The total staff will consist of 15 people.

Knight said the current Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of Class 2 could change to the preferred

Class 1 rating once the firehouse is built and staffed. He said the district is currently only two points away from the "ideal" rating that helps insurance providers measure a homeowners' risk.

"That is my hope," Knight said of obtaining the improved rating, "but it still falls on us to do the job."

During the short ceremony, fire district board chair Al Hitchcock extended appreciation to the residents who cast a positive vote for the tax increase.

"You did the right thing," he said. "So, get out your shovels and hammers, we're ready to build a station. The voters spoke and they spoke loud."

Horry County Council Vice Chair Tyler Servant, who represents District 5 covering the southeastern

part of the county that includes the Garden City Beach and Murrells Inlet area, said Friday was an exciting day for the Burgess community.

"It is a growing area and anytime you have an opportunity to improve response time to the residents, it's a great thing," Servant said.

International Club resident Rosemary Toth, who volunteers at the Murrells Inlet firehouse, said she has watched the community and the need for an additional fire station grow since she moved here from Connecticut 11 years ago.

"Burgess is just a beautiful place to live and this will add to the safety of our residents," she said.

Angela Nicholas is a freelance reporter and can be reached at aknicholas28@gmail.com

Title: **MeetSC's topGOP donor– andthe candidatehe likes**
 Author: THEBUZZ BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
 Size: 93.46 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



THE BUZZ

Meet SC's top GOP donor – and the candidate he likes

Allendale lumber mill owner has contributed more than \$200,000

How Lindsey Graham dominated S.C. presidential contributions

Senator tells colleague he got beat by a girl

BY ANDREW SHAIN
ashain@thestate.com

South Carolina's top Republican donor in the 2016 presidential race is a self-described pragmatic fiscal conservative who runs a 230-employee lumber company in Allendale.

Through Collum's Lumber Products, **Hank Scott** donated \$200,000 to a pro-**Marco Rubio** political action committee last year, the only six-figure contribution tied to a candidate in the presidential race from a S.C. individual or company, according to the Federal Election Commission data.

Scott has donated another \$9,600 to Rubio's campaign and a pro-Rubio committee.

Scott met Rubio at the S.C.

GOP's 2012 Silver Elephant dinner, where the Floridian spoke a year after joining the U.S. Senate. But it was during a private event about two years ago that Scott chose his 2016 favorite.

"He has the best chance to win. He's less caustic and most likable," said Scott, chief executive at Collum's. "Marco is the future of the party."

Scott wants a winner after GOP losses in the past two presidential elections, defeats where the Abbeville executive had money in the game.

Scott contributed \$65,000 to **Mitt Romney's** political committee in 2012 and \$7,500 to **John McCain's** political committee in 2008 in addition to donations to

their campaigns, according to election data.

"I have wasted a small fortune on candidates for president and didn't want to do it again," Scott said.

This time around, Scott passed on backing former Florida Gov. **Jeb Bush**, not wanting a third member of the Bush family in the White House. He said he did not like the demeanor of U.S. Sen. **Ted Cruz** of Texas or New Jersey Gov. **Chris Christie**.

"They were a bit caustic, and I guess I'm an old Southern boy and manners matter," said Scott, a Citadel graduate who runs an 80-year-old business with sales of

SEE BUZZ, 14A

Title: **MeetSC's topGOP donor– andthe candidatehe likes**
 Author: THEBUZZ BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
 Size: 93.46 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

BUZZ

FROM PAGE 3A

more than \$100 million a year.

Scott says he is “as conservative as the next guy,” adding he is looking for politicians to better watch over how Washington spends its money.

A nominee who heavily pushes social conservative issues, like Cruz, will scare away women voters in swing states like Ohio, he added.

“I’m pragmatic,” he said. “I’m not hung up on social issues, not on gay marriage. I have my own opinions, but the state should not get involved. It’s called freedom.”

Scott said he is the most politically involved of his brothers, who also work in the family business. However, he has brought one brother over to Rubio.

The other is sitting on the fence and has flirted with the idea of backing GOP front-runner **Donald Trump**, a real estate developer and reality-television star who has offered few details on his promises to fix the nation’s problems.

“Some of these clowns, what they are feeding people is not going to happen,” Scott said.

THE GRAHAM EFFECT

Looking back at presidential fundraising in South Carolina last year, it’s impossible not to notice the effect of having a homegrown candidate in the field.

U.S. Sen. **Lindsey Graham**, R-Seneca, raised \$1.5 million in his home state last year, more than the top five active GOP

candidates combined collected in South Carolina. A pro-Graham super PAC collected another \$272,500 in the state.

South Carolina is far from the wealthiest state, making it difficult for candidates to raise large sums here. Still, Graham’s S.C. haul accounted for more than 40 percent of his contributions nationally from individuals.

Part of Graham’s legacy as the first S.C. politician to run for the White House in three decades might turn out to be how he took some Palmetto State supporters – and money – away from other candidates.

Former Florida Gov. **Jeb Bush** likely was hurt most of all. Bush and Graham had overlapping supporters, including many who backed the presidential runs of Bush’s father and brother.

Consider: Charleston billionaire businesswoman **Anita Zucker** gave the Graham super PAC \$40,000 only two months before she decided to back Bush, after the senator quit the race in December.

“The checks were for Sen. Graham. I don’t think any of them were writing checks for ‘President Lindsey Graham,’ ” Winthrop University political scientist Scott Huffman said of Graham’s S.C. donors. “They wanted to stay in the senator’s good graces.”

Except for South Carolina, Graham did not crack the top 10 in the polls during his candidacy, a performance that fell well short of what he needed to do to make the

main debate stage in the large GOP field.

Like many of his financial supporters, Graham ended up endorsing Bush.

‘I HOPE I DIDN’T OFFEND’

While senators were debating the fact that they were not debating roads Thursday, state Sen. **Vincent Sheheen**, D-Kershaw, blamed the impasse on Gov. **Nikki Haley’s** insistence that an income tax cut be included in any road-repair bill that also raises gas taxes.

Senate Majority Leader **Harvey Peeler**, R-Cherokee, went back and forth with Sheheen over the cause of the delay.

Then, Peeler referred to Sheheen losing to Haley in the 2010 and 2014 governor’s races.

“I feel sorry for you,” Peeler told Sheheen. “You’ve been beat up twice by a girl.”

Last year, the topic of sexism under the State House dome was debated after state Sen. **Tom Corbin**, R-Greenville, made an offensive joke to Sen. **Katrina Shealy**, R-Lexington, the Senate’s only female S.C. senator at the time.

But Peeler said he did not think his comment to Sheheen was inappropriate.

“It was said in jest,” Peeler said. “I hope I didn’t offend the governor, and I hope I didn’t offend the senator from Kershaw, and I hope I didn’t offend the public.”

A NEW HOPE FOR REPUBLICANS

Hope Walker, who worked for the S.C. GOP before running **Mike Huckabee’s** 2016 presidential campaign in South Carolina, was named the state party’s executive director last week.

Matt Moore has been both the S.C. GOP’s party chairman and executive director since late 2013. He will remain chairman.

Walker, an Irmo native, previously has been the state, political and member services director for the party. Huckabee dropped out of the race Monday.

STATE HOUSE RACES

The Buzz sifted through ethics filings, social media and news releases for a list published last Sunday of contested State House seats.

Seems there are a few more.

S.C. House

● **District 15: Samuel Rivers**, R-Charleston, has a primary challenger, **Steven Smith**, a pastor who works in corporate finance for Verizon Wireless.

● **District 79:** The seat being vacated by Mia McLeod, D-Richland, has another challenger, attorney **Van Williams Jr.**, who will run as a Democrat against two other contenders.

● **District 110:** Rep. Chip Limehouse, R-Charleston, is retiring, and **Will Freeman**, who works in the tourism industry, will compete against three others for the GOP nomination, including the son of a

Title: **MeetSC's topGOP donor– andthe candidatehe likes**
 Author: THEBUZZ BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
 Size: 93.46 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

former S.C. House speaker.

● **District 119:** State Rep. **Leon Stavrakis**, D-Charleston, has a challenger in the general election – **Lee Edwards**, a Republican who owns an entertainment company.

Know of a campaign that Buzz hasn't heard of yet? Email



thebuzz@thestate.com

The Buzz will add to its list of contested races as more candidates are announced.

2016 IN SC

John Kasich: The Republican Ohio governor will hold events Wednesday in Mount Pleasant and Charleston; town halls

Thursday in Pawleys Island, North Myrtle Beach and Florence; and attend a S.C. Chamber of Commerce lunch Friday as well as hold events in Orangeburg and Bluffton.

Marco Rubio: The Republican U.S. senator from Florida will hold a rally Wednesday in Spartanburg.

Donald Trump: The Republican developer from New York will hold a rally Wednesday at Clemson University's Ed Garri-son Arena.

● You can find more details on presidential candidates visiting South Carolina at **thes-tate.com/the-buzz**

— STAFF WRITER CASSIE COPE CONTRIBUTED.

Title: **Report: SC workers make less, pay more for benefits**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
 Size: 40.45 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Report: SC workers make less, pay more for benefits

BY SEANNA ADCOX

Associated Press

A report on state workers' salaries shows they're underpaid compared with their counterparts in other states and local governments within South Carolina, plus they give up more of their paycheck for health care and retirement benefits than other public workers.

Rep. Mike Pitts said Friday

the findings confirm what he thought when he pushed for the state-paid study during last year's budget debate.

"We certainly can't compete with private industry ... but we should be competitive with other states, and especially with local governments," said Pitts, R-Laurens, chairman of a House budget-writing panel for state

law enforcement agencies.

State officers can earn an additional \$5,000 or more by going to a local police or sheriff's department, costing the state millions in revolving-door training, Pitts said.

The Highway Patrol alone is losing roughly 100 troopers a

SEE STATE, 8A

STATE FROM PAGE 3A

year, he said.

"We're losing more troopers than we're training," he said. "The problem's already critical in law enforcement and corrections."

According to the report, state salaries in South Carolina lag other states' wages in comparable jobs by an average of 15 percent; in-state public jobs, by 16 percent; and in-state private-sector jobs, by 18 percent.

"This creates challenges both in recruitment and retention of qualified employees," reads the report by California-based Kenning Consulting. "Unlike in some other states where the overall competitiveness of the benefits package offsets the level of competitiveness of salaries, this is not the case."

South Carolina workers' 8.2 percent pension

contributions are the highest among all Southeastern states and 3 percent higher than the national average for state workers. The 21 percent share employees pay for their health insurance is higher than the typical range of 7 to 15 percent workers in other state governments pay, according to the report.

It points out the state's salary structure hasn't changed since 1995.

Although Pitts hopes the report leads to a salary overhaul, he doesn't expect the Legislature to respond to the findings in this year's budget. House budget panels are putting together that chamber's spending proposal for 2016-17.

After a review later this year, Pitts said, salary boosts should be phased in over the next four or five years.

"The cost to the state won't be a small price

tag," he said.

Carlton Washington, executive director of the State Employees Association, said he didn't expect legislators to make any sweeping salary changes this year. That's why his group is pushing for a 5 percent cost-of-living increase in the budget for all state workers.

A bipartisan group of senators held a news conference last month to call for that increase. Its chances are unclear.

Employees haven't received a 5 percent raise across the board in at least two decades. The closest was 4 percent in 2005, according to the state Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office.

Last fall, employees making less than \$100,000 received a one-time \$800 bonus. Otherwise, employees have received two across-the-board raises since

2008 — 3 percent in 2012 and 2 percent in 2014.

But past budgets have selectively granted higher raises. In 2014, state law enforcement officers who made less than \$50,000 got a 5 percent boost. Last year, legislators approved raises of up to 15 percent to Department of Social Service caseworkers to help with retention. Also, state law allows agency directors to give raises at their discretion.

Washington said such "cherry-picking" is discouraging for employees "who are doing a service and not being paid a living wage."

The 2015-16 budget designated up to \$300,000 for the study, after legislators overturned Gov. Nikki Haley's line-item veto of it. It ultimately cost the state about \$217,700, according to the Department of Administration.

Title: **ARE THE PANTHERS SOUTH CAROLINA'S TEAM?**
 Author: BY BEN BREINER bbreiner@thestate.com
 Size: 100.44 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



SUPER BOWL 50

ARE THE PANTHERS SOUTH CAROLINA'S TEAM?

College fandom traditionally runs stronger than
pro allegiance

Local stores sell very little team gear

No other NFL team has greater pull in-state

BY BEN BREINER

bbreiner@thestate.com

Mick Mixon is quick to point out this odd little fact: the Carolina Panthers logo was designed to mimic the outline of North and South Carolina.

It's more subtle than some other visual tricks in team logos, but it's a nod to something those who run the team believe: The Panthers, despite a stadium in Charlotte and jerseys a shade of Tar Heels baby blue, are very much South Carolina's team.

The team's website even boldly declares, "Two

states, one team."

But it's sometimes not clear how much that rings true.

"South Carolina is unique because of how prominent the colleges are," said Mixon, who worked in Columbia radio in the 1980s and now calls play-by-play for the Panthers on radio. "It is not a state that has really been touched, unless you count racing, that has been touched by professional sports in the way that, say, Charlotte had been. The

SEE PANTHERS, 9A



MORE INSIDE

Former Gamecock Darian Stewart starting at safety for Broncos in Sunday's big game, **1B**.

Denver receiver Emmanuel Sanders says Panthers' defensive back Josh Norman is a "media creation," **2B**

Title: **ARE THE PANTHERS SOUTH CAROLINA'S TEAM?**
 Author: BY BEN BREINER bbreiner@thestate.com
 Size: 100.44 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

PANTHERS

FROM PAGE 1A

Charlotte Hornets and later the Bobcats.”

The state’s reputation as having a college sports bent has been earned by the loyal dedication to both the University of South Carolina and Clemson. When the Panthers first came into existence, they needed a temporary home, and then-University of South Carolina athletics director Mike McGee was steadfastly against allowing the team to play there.

Currently, a few local businesses seemed to reflect some level of ambivalence in the products they stocked. An informal poll of three Columbia-area Target Stores, three Wal-Marts and a pair of Dick’s Sporting Goods locations showed most had relatively little in the way of Panthers paraphernalia in the days right after Carolina earned its trip to the Super Bowl.

At most, two of three Targets had infant jerseys. Two Wal-Marts had a smaller selection of sweat-shirts and T-shirts, while one had nothing. One of the Dick’s Sporting Goods

boasted team apparel, and more of it was NFC championship items than regular stock.

That’s in comparison to a Gastonia, N.C. Wal-Mart, which, according to an employee, had a full rack of jerseys.

Panthers games are broadcast by 16 radio stations in South Carolina, compared to 34 in North Carolina. But North Carolina also has nearly 10 million people to South Carolina’s 4.8 million, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

But there’s also a case those beyond Rock Hill and York County have embraced the NFL team across the border, and that starts with the team’s history.

South Carolina governor Carroll Campbell partnered with his North Carolina counterpart to form the task force to explore the option of the states getting a professional team in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

“South Carolina is, in many ways, ground zero for football,” said Bob McAlister, a longtime aide and friend of Campbell, who

died in 2005. “There are not more rabid college fans in the country. Whether the citizens of South Carolina would accept the Panthers was never much of a question mark. The question was would it detract from college sports.”

Considering the interest in Gamecock football, it hasn’t.

Although the Panthers were barred from playing in Columbia, they made Clemson their home in the first season. Owner Jerry Richardson attended Wofford College in Spartanburg, and the team still holds its preseason training camp there (Richardson was also good friends with Campbell and attended his funeral).

It’s also fair to say, it’s not as if any other NFL teams have encroached on the Palmetto State. Facebook posted county-by-county maps of the largest fanbases by its data. More than half of South Carolina’s counties had more Panthers fans than any others (the Dallas Cowboys and Pittsburgh Steelers were well-represented, plus one county was heavy

on Atlanta Falcons fans).

Mixon said he regularly comes into the Palmetto State for promotions at local radio stations. The team’s director for community relations, Riley Fields, said the Panthers’ outreach — grants to high schools, military base visits, raising money after the flooding this year — impacted South Carolina and wasn’t concentrated in the part of the state near Charlotte.

Panther games have also had priority in the state’s television markets. Initially it irritated some, but now a generation of young South Carolinians have grown up watching the team.

McAlister said he plans to root for the Panthers in Sunday’s Super Bowl against the Denver Broncos, and most folks around him will as well. But he couldn’t have imagined doing that 10 years ago.

“It took awhile because we’re not used to pulling for anybody in Carolina blue,” McAlister said. “We are just genetically predisposed to not like any sports teams from North Carolina.”

“Over time, they grew on us.”

Title: **ARE THE PANTHERS SOUTH CAROLINA'S TEAM?**

Author: BY BEN BREINER bbreiner@thestate.com

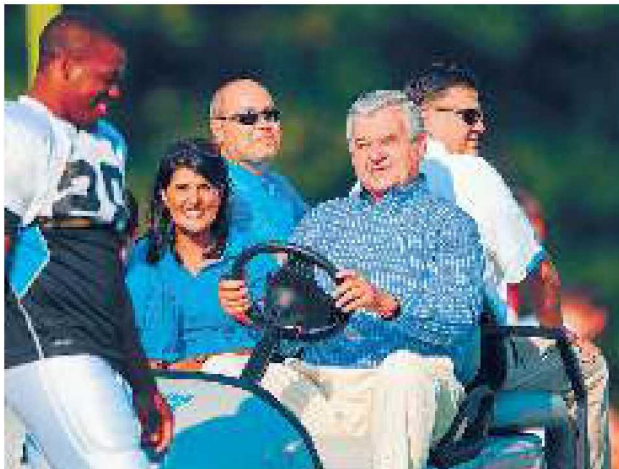
Size: 100.44 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



TRACY GLANTZ tgiantz@thestate.com

Carolina Panthers linebacker Thomas Davis slaps hands with Leaphart Elementary School students, part of the team's community outreach locally.



JEFF SINER jsiner@charlotteobserver.com

Carolina Panthers owner Jerry Richardson escorts S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley around the practice field during the team's practice July 30, 2012, at Wofford College.

148 Gov. Haley and heat of national spotlight

By PHIL NOBLE

Guest column

It's the call that every aspirant in the political hinterland dreams of: "Will you give our party's response to the State of the Union Address?"

The answer is always "yes" – and then the drama begins. The stakes are incredibly high. Many fail, some miserably (see Gov. Bobby Jindal in 2009), but the opportunity is exposure to more than 30 million people as the alternative voice to the President of the United States.

Gov. Haley got the call – pretty heady stuff for a kid from Bamberg, S.C., or anywhere else for that matter.

Enough about the drama, so how did she do?

The speech itself had two parts. The first short section was an obligatory, gratuitous slap at President Obama with familiar lines about Obama Care, the deficit and terrorists.

It was just a little red meat thrown to the Obama haters and then she moved on to talk about a "vision of a brighter American future."

But though she never used his name, her words were not really about America, but about Donald Trump.

She talked about Trump's racism, inflammatory language and immigration. Then she talked about the good way that South Carolina responded to the Emanuel N i n e shooting and then threw in a not-so-

oblique reference to the troubles of Ferguson and Baltimore – "We didn't have riots, we had hugs."

Most of all, it was a repudiation of Trump. She used her own personal sto-

ry as the daughter of Indian immigrants juxtaposed with Trump's rhetoric – "... it can be tempting to follow the siren call of the angriest voices. We must resist that temptation. No one who is willing to work hard, abide by our laws, and love our traditions should ever feel unwelcome in this country."

She continued, "Some people (Trump) think that you have to be the loudest voice in the room to make a difference. That is just not true ... We would respect differences in modern families, but we would also insist on respect for

religious liberty as a cornerstone of our democracy," (i.e. Trump's ban on Muslim immigration).

David Brooks, the influential columnist for The New York Times, summarized Haley's speech as the Republican establishment's case against Trump, and indeed it was.

The reaction from the Trump forces was swift and venal; pundit Anne Coulter tweeted "Trump should deport Nikki Haley."

Haley's address rekindled the speculation that she would be the perfect vice-presidential candidate – but presumably not for Donald Trump. Her boosters cite the obvious: She is an attractive woman of immigrant parents who's handling of the removal of the Confederate flag was a rare example of racial sensitivity by a Deep South Republican.

She's the perfect antidote to the "angry old white men" problem that is crippling the Republican Party with the fastest growing segments of American votes – women, the young and people of color.

There is so much irony in all this that it's hard to know where to begin.

First, the Republican

establishment

It is indeed rich that Haley is now the darling of the very folks she ran against when she was first elected. She was a rabid Tea Party favorite. Who can forget the picture and endorsement by Sarah Palin on the steps of the State Capital in Haley's first gubernatorial campaign (never mind that they had to pay Palin)?

Palin went all out for Haley with recorded robo calls and TV ads that blasted the establishment and praised Haley as a "kindred spirit."

In many ways, Haley and Palin were a lot alike – both are attractive, they came from nowhere politically, and they were light on substance and long on flash. But the difference is that Palin gave up being governor of Alaska and Haley has continued as governor of South Carolina.

Second, the flag

Prior to the shooting of the Emanuel Nine, no one ever used the words "Gov. Haley" and "racial sensitivity" in the same sentence. She had been an ardent supporter of keeping

the Confederate flag flying and the list of issues where she had ignored the interest of the 30 percent of her citizens who are African-American is very long.

Third, the VP nomination

The talk is hot and heavy, and on the surface it all makes sense. She's on everyone's short list of possible candidates. But, I'd bet dollars to donuts it will never happen. The reason is Haley's "problems" from her past.

In her first campaign and early days of her administration, she was dogged by allegations of multiple illicit sexual affairs – complete with lurid details by a



NOBLE





blogger/lover and an affidavit by a lobbyist.

Then there were all sorts of allegations of financial irregularities and conflicts of interest that put tens of thousands of dollars in her pocket.

Are the allegations true? Isn't it a double standard to raise sexual issues as she is an attractive woman?

Were the payments she received legitimate or a clear corrupt conflict of interest?

As regrettable as it may be, in the hyper media age we live in – it doesn't matter if they are true or not.

What matters is the alle-

gations are there and though largely forgotten by most South Carolinians, they have never really been resolved.

Now fast forward to about five dozen reporters, investigative journalists, hungry bloggers and political rumor mongers descending on Columbia 10 minutes after she is picked for vice president and ... well, you get the picture.

And so does every political operative with access to Google who is charged with vetting Gov. Haley for consideration for the vice president slot.

It's unfortunate, it's ugly, it's disgusting – and it's also the way it is today.

So, I'm glad that Gov. Haley is taking the high road in condemning Trump and talking about the need for racial and religious tolerance. She presents a good image for our state. Let her enjoy her time in the spotlight.

But, let's not let ourselves get carried away. As many politicians have learned, too much time in the white hot heat of the national political spotlight, and you can get burned. Ask Sarah Palin.

Phil Noble is president of the S.C. New Democrats. E-mail him at phil@scnewdemocrts.org

Progressive
Journal
Pageland, SC
Circ. 4126
From Page:
4
1/26/2016
64114