



Title: Critics target S.C.'s 'political ATM'
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Critics target S.C.'s 'political ATM'

Lawmakers, donors call for reforms to stop misuse of campaign cash, gifts

BY TONY BARTELME
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State lawmakers should pass stronger anticorruption laws and allow independent investigations into potential ethical breaches, say campaign donors,

Columbia insiders and lawmakers.

Their comments follow "Capitol Gains," a report Sunday by The Post and Courier and the Center for Public Integrity that found candidates in South Carolina have what amounts to a personal ATM that dispensed nearly \$100 million since 2009.

"I have given thousands of dollars over the years to candidates, but my checkbook is closed," said Walter Carr, owner of Carr Properties in Hanahan.

"They're using money for things that have nothing to do with their legislative responsibilities."

The Post and Courier and the Center for Public Integrity compiled and analyzed more than 100,000 campaign disclosure forms, gifts, income reports and other data obtained through public records requests. The analysis revealed that state lawmakers and elected officials enriched themselves in small ways and large — from using campaign money to buy GoPros and

pay off parking tickets to receiving freebie trips to Turkey and Switzerland.

"They need to be embarrassed," said Carr, echoing other critics. Carr said he has Libertarian views about many issues and thinks it might be cleaner for politicians to spend campaign money however they want — as long as everything is reported publicly. "I believe in total transparency."

Please see CAPITOL, Page A8

CAPITOL GAINS

To read Capitol Gains, our ongoing investigative series, go to postandcourier.com/capitol-gains

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# Critics target state's political cash machine

CAPITOL, from A1

"Many candidates consider almost anything to be related to their campaigns," added Lynn Teague, vice president for issues and action for the League of Women Voters South Carolina.

Teague said that lawmakers interested in reform need to take an especially hard look at how candidates and lawmakers use their positions to boost their business incomes.

She said her group has long been concerned that PACs, corporations and other private entities have tried to buy influence by paying lawmakers' businesses consultant fees. Such fees don't have to be reported publicly.

"The saying since Lost Trust (the early 1990s investigation into corruption at the Statehouse) is that you have to report a cup of coffee but that you don't have to report that \$40,000 consulting fee from a corporation."

She said that supporters of stronger ethics laws ran into strong headwinds this year from an entrenched group of lawmakers bent on maintaining the status quo, including members of the Senate Democratic

Caucus and state Sen. Luke Rankin, R-Horry and chairman of the Senate Ethics Committee.

State lawmakers currently investigate themselves through House and Senate ethics committees, a situation that critics say is ripe for conflicts of interest and abuse. "You often hear from the public that ethics reform is hopeless, but we don't believe that," Teague said. "There are many people in the Legislature who want to do the right thing."

Last year, the House passed "a tremendous number of ethics bills," House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Hartsville, said in a statement. "Unfortunately, all of our efforts have gone unappreciated as the Senate has yet to pass a single measure."

Republican Sen. Larry Martin of Pickens said he is not at all surprised by the many questionable uses of campaign donations uncovered by The Post and Courier and the Center for Public Integrity.

During the last session, Martin pushed for laws that would set up an independent oversight committee of non-legislators.

That effort failed along with broader efforts in both houses

to clean up the General Assembly's lackadaisical ethics rules and enforcement.

Martin characterized the current ethics system as fundamentally flawed. "I do know that the public has a very difficult time understanding why we insist on governing our own ethics complaints."

He said he plans to continue fighting for reform in the next legislative session that begins in January but does not hold out much hope. "Unless there's a change of heart by some of these people who voted against us, we're wasting our time."

Questionable use of campaign donations is the least of the ethics problems facing the Legislature, Martin added. He sees the ability of people to make anonymous large cash donations to political action committees as a far bigger danger.

Big money does have an impact on who gets elected, yet "nobody knows where it's coming from," Martin said. "That's about as big a threat to the election process as any that we face."

Supporters of the practice argue that such donations are a legitimate exercise of free speech, Martin said. "It's not

free speech. It's anonymous speech."

Gov. Nikki Haley supports stronger ethics laws, her press secretary Chaney Adams said. Haley "has fought hard for four years for income disclosure, independent investigations of legislative ethics complaints and transparency for lawyer legislators."

Rankin, chairman of the Senate's ethics committee, was more optimistic, saying an ethics reform bill likely will pass next year.

"A large number of senators have worked for three-plus years to get a bill passed," he said. Reform should include better disclosure of income sources, require bank statements to be submitted along with campaign reports, the elimination of leadership PACs and the creation of a joint oversight committee of House and Senate members, he said.

**Doug Pardue and Glenn Smith** contributed to this report.

Title: **Part-time pay for part-time jobs**

Author:

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## *Part-time pay for part-time jobs*

**T**he headline on a Sunday news story asked the question: “Is lawmakers’ pay enough to live on?”

Of course it isn’t. And it shouldn’t be. Legislative service is supposed to be a part-time job in South Carolina.

The challenge should not be how to increase the salary of legislators; it should be how to cut the amount of time they spend in Columbia.

The state constitution envisioned legislative service as 40 days — that’s the maximum it allows for legislative pay.

But the legislative session now stretches from January to June. The length of the session reflects just how much state business the Legislature controls. It also speaks to how much lawmakers enjoy basking in the glow of running the show in Columbia.

As reporter David Slade’s article noted, lawmakers get paid for per diem and travel expenses while in session. The \$140-per-day allowance covers meals and lodging, but legislators get the full amount no matter where they live or what their actual expenses are. Many legislators live within driving distance of the Statehouse, and can return home each evening instead of paying for a hotel room.

Add the cumulative per diem to the \$10,400 salary, and the \$12,000 for so-called “in-district expenses,” and you start getting

close to the actual level of compensation.

As Mr. Slade wrote: “The salary, in-district expenses and per-diem money add up to about \$30,000. Then lawmakers get an extra \$600 if they head any of the more than two dozen committees, \$600 for postage, and mileage money for one round-trip to Columbia each week of the session — roughly \$120 per trip for a Charleston-area lawmaker. Some also receive thousands of dollars from counties that don’t provide office space and staff for the delegation.”

And some lawmakers take retirement pay in lieu of their legislative salary for the obvious reason that the generous pension plan pays more. Sen. Hugh Leatherman, for example, receives \$36,149 from his legislative pension.

Lawmakers are reluctant to increase their pay because of the potential political fallout.

The last effort was a back door pay hike approved by the Legislature in 2014 for another \$12,000 for in-district expenses. Incidentally, in-district expenses are treated as taxable income and count toward lawmakers’ pensions.

That increase was vetoed by Gov. Nikki Haley, who said that legislators were aware of what the job paid when they ran for election.

That pay reflects what legislators signed up for — part-time positions.

Title: Poll: Conflicts continue in South Carolina over Confederate flag
Author: BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
Size: 65.1 square inch
Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



Poll: Conflicts continue in South Carolina over Confederate flag

BY ANDREW SHAIN
ashain@thestate.com

South Carolinians remain sharply divided and conflicted about the Confederate flag.

Two-thirds of South Carolinians agree with the General Assembly's decision to remove the Confederate flag from the State House grounds this summer after nine African-Americans were killed in a Charleston church, a Winthrop University poll released

Wednesday found.

But to many in the state

FROM PAGE 3A

POLL

Americans were oppressed as slaves. "The state is suffering from Confederacy withdrawal," Randolph said. "The state needs a detox."

However, Terry Hughey, commander for the Columbia-based Lt. Gen. Wade Hampton Camp of the S.C. Sons of Confederate Veterans, said the flag became the scapegoat for the Charleston slayings.

Accused Charleston shooter Dylann Roof was photographed with the flag. But, Hughey added, there has been no proof the banner contributed to the killings of an African-American

where the Civil War began, the Confederate flag remains an emblem of Southern heritage.

The poll found 47 percent of South Carolinians see the flag as a symbol of pride

versus 40 percent who see the banner as racially divisive.

The differences of opinion about the Confederate flag's meaning are stark along racial and political lines.

More than 60 percent of

pastor and eight parishioners.

"Anything Confederate, anything Southern has been under a constant barrage," he said. "That negativity has not helped those of us who believe in the historical aspects of the flag."

The conflict will continue into the new legislative session in January, when lawmakers debate how to display the flag, now at the S.C. Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum.

AN EPIPHANY

Wednesday's Winthrop

white South Carolinians and nearly 70 percent of Republicans see the Confederate flag as a Southern pride symbol. Nearly three-quarters of African-Americans and about 60 percent of Democrats consider the banner as a sign of racial conflict.

S.C. NAACP president Lonnie Randolph said he sees ignorance in the efforts to preserve Southern heritage. Confederate supporters forget that African-

SEE POLL, 5A

Two-thirds back the decision to remove flag from the State House grounds

But a majority see the flag as a symbol of Southern heritage, not racial divide

Flag came down after nine African-Americans were killed in a Charleston church

Poll shows how quickly opinions about flying the flag at the State House have reversed.

Last November, six in 10 South Carolinians thought the Civil War icon should remain flying at South Carolina's most prominent state building, as it had for five decades, according to Winthrop.

But that was before the shootings at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston in June that devastated the country. Authorities brought hate-crime charges against the accused killer, who is white.

In the latest survey, slightly more than half of white respondents thought lawmakers made the right decision in taking down the Confederate flag. More than nine in 10 African-Americans backed the decision.

Half of Republicans supported the flag's removal, while 83 percent of Democrats agreed with the decision.

Winthrop University political scientist Scott Huffman

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said even while many South Carolinians see the flag as a symbol of heritage, the Charleston slayings were an epiphany. "They saw the pain (the flag) could inflict on other people," Huffmon said.

That was the realization of S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley, who did not back taking down the flag during her more than four years in office until the Charleston shootings. Haley has received praise for calling for the flag's removal. On Thursday, for example, she will receive an award for her leadership after the Charleston slayings at a Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations dinner, the gov-

ernor's office said.

#### **HALEY TAKES HIT WITH GOP**

But not everyone is happy with the Republican. Hughey says the governor, in her second and final term, surrendered to people from outside the state who think the flag is racially divisive. "It's an affront to say I'm bigoted because I respect the (Confederate) flag," he said.

Haley's reputation took a hit from some South Carolinians, according to the latest Winthrop poll.

At 55 percent, Haley's overall approval rating is unchanged from Winthrop's February survey.

But the potential vice presidential pick lost some backing from fellow S.C. Republicans. Haley received a thumbs up from 68 percent of Republicans in the latest poll, but that was down from 78 percent in February.

Ignoring the flag, the legacy of slavery and the struggle for civil rights remain divisive topics in South Carolina, the latest Winthrop poll found. By a margin of 51-45, those surveyed said they do not think generations of slavery and discrimination have made it difficult for African-Americans to climb the economic ladder.

Now that the flag has been removed, some South

Carolinians might be saying that African-Americans should stop complaining that others are limiting their economic opportunities, Huffmon said. "They think folks will no longer have that excuse."

The NAACP's Randolph sees something else in those numbers — a lack of respect for the plight of African-Americans. "It proves there's a slow process in changing hearts and minds," he said.

Winthrop surveyed 963 South Carolinians by landline and cell phones between Sept. 20 and 27 for the poll. The poll's margin of error was plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Title: **Confederate flag still divides S.C., poll concludes**  
 Author: BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com  
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 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



## WINTHROP POLL

# Confederate flag still divides S.C., poll concludes

## Survey sees stark differences

BY ANDREW SHAIN  
 ashain@thestate.com

South Carolinians remain sharply divided and conflicted about the Confederate flag.

Two-thirds of South Carolinians agree with the General Assembly's decision to remove the Confederate flag from the State House grounds this summer after nine African-Americans were killed in a Charleston church, a Winthrop

University poll released Wednesday found.

But to many in the state where the Civil War began, the Confederate flag remains an emblem of Southern heritage.

The poll found 47 percent of South Carolinians see the flag as a symbol of pride versus 40 percent who see the banner as racially divisive.

The differences of opinion about

**SEE FLAG POLL, 7A**

FROM PAGE 1A

## FLAG POLL

the Confederate flag's meaning are stark along racial and political lines.

More than 60 percent of white South Carolinians and nearly 70 percent of Republicans see the Confederate flag as a Southern pride symbol. Nearly three-quarters of African-Americans and about 60 percent of Democrats consider the banner as a sign of racial conflict.

S.C. NAACP president Lonnie Randolph said he sees ignorance in the efforts to preserve Southern heritage. Confederate supporters forget that African-Americans were oppressed as slaves. "The state is suffering from Confederacy withdrawal," Randolph said. "The state needs a detox."

However, Terry Hugh-ey, commander for the

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The conflict will continue into the new legislative session in January, when lawmakers debate how to display the flag, now at

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### Other Winthrop poll findings

- **Senators:** Support for U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Seneca Republican running for president, has fallen since February. His overall approval rating is 40 percent, down from 45.5 percent seven months ago. Graham's approval among Republicans tumbled even more, falling to 46 percent from 60 percent. Approval of South Carolina's other U.S. senator — Tim Scott, R-North Charleston — remained unchanged at 53 percent, while falling slightly among Republicans to 68 percent.

- **Gay marriage:** Half of South Carolinians do not think same-sex marriages should be legally valid despite a U.S. Supreme Court decision allowing them. But just a third of those surveyed said county clerks and probate judges should be allowed to deny marriage licenses to same-sex couples because of their personal beliefs.

- **Roads:** An overwhelming majority of South Carolinians — 84 percent — think the state should spend money on repairing existing roads rather than building new ones.



Title: **No excuses: Fix rural schools**

Author:

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## *No excuses: Fix rural schools*

**T**he General Assembly seems to have two choices: It can complain about an order of the S.C. Supreme Court, or it can try to improve the inadequate schools in rural South Carolina.

Too bad the Legislature's leadership has opted to complain, as yet another class of rural students spends the year in schools that are inadequate in the eyes of the court — and people throughout the state.

Oddly, Sen. President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, and House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Hartsville, did not take advantage of legal grievance procedures in an effort to amend or modify the order.

Of course, ignoring the court is easier. After all, the Legislature has neglected the rural schools problem for decades.

South Carolina's high court took an inordinately long time — 22 years — to find that the state has failed in its duty to provide a “minimally adequate” education to children in the its poorest school districts.

In November of 2014 the justices instructed the Legislature to work with the school districts that had sued the state to develop a plan in a reasonable amount of time to address the inadequacies.

The court later said a panel of experts should be established by Oct. 15 of this year to review the plan and report on it to the court. The plan itself is due on Feb. 1, 2016 — a full 14 months from the finding.

Still, Speaker Lucas called the deadlines “arbitrary” and “unreasonable.” He even told Carl Epps, the lawyer representing the plaintiffs and certainly someone

whose perspective and knowledge would be helpful to the committee, that he must withdraw the request for a deadline or forfeit his seat on the task force.

Given the foot-dragging that lawmakers have exhibited so far, it's a good guess that without deadlines they would have continued to put off finding a comprehensive solution to the rural schools problem.

It really shouldn't have taken a lawsuit to spark legislators' concerns about failing schools in the poorest parts of the state. Without adequate educations, the residents of those counties face tough odds for getting good jobs.

And without adequately trained workers, those counties face tough odds for attracting business and industry and the jobs they provide.

This governor and the Legislature have stressed “jobs, jobs, jobs” — and this is no way to bring them to our state.

Gov. Nikki Haley has shown an interest in helping those poor, rural districts by offering incentives for teachers who take jobs in them, expanding the reading coach program and providing modern technology.

But there is much more to do, and the General Assembly must be part of that overdue process.

If voters question their elected representatives' commitment to public education, the legislative leadership's response in this Supreme Court case offers disturbing answers.

It's time for lawmakers to stop looking for excuses and start looking for solutions to the long-standing — and devastating — problem of inadequate rural schools.



Title: **Drilling for dollars**  
Author:  
Size: 15.5 square inch  
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## Drilling for dollars

Much good comes from grassroots organizations opposed to offshore drilling. Our unified voices are surely heard. Nevertheless, they are ignored by some political heavyweights who are beholden to the energy industry either directly or indirectly due to campaign contributions.

Two notables are Gov. Nikki Haley and Sen. Tim Scott. What the citizenry needs to understand is that, from day one after being elected, the first priority for the vast majority of politicians is to be re-elected. Hence the need for money from special interest groups.

The money is used at election time to flood the media with ads telling the public how great and indispensable they are, usually with great success. They depend on the notoriously short memory of voters. Outrage and protest will not suffice to subdue this political addiction. What will get the attention of these addicts and force them to heed

the will of the people is direct contact with their staff.

Contact your representatives and express your adamant opposition to offshore drilling. And, yes, threaten to vote against them should they not yield to your wishes. This is a right provided to all voters and indeed a responsibility. In this way you can make your vote count before election day when it may be too late.

Special interest money is used as a means to obtain a desirable end — our votes. Our expressed use of our votes through direct contact before elections, and assurances that our memories won't fail, is more powerful than special interest money.

Make no mistake. There is not a more serious threat today to the coastal region's economy and ecology than this ill-advised venture.

PAT SANDERS  
*Argonne Street  
Charleston*

Title: S.C. Medicaid agency paid for 222 abortions in the past 5 years
Author: BY CASSIE COPE ccope@thestate.com
Size: 32.86 square inch
Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



HOUSE PANEL INQUIRY

S.C. Medicaid agency paid for 222 abortions in the past 5 years

BY CASSIE COPE
ccope@thestate.com

South Carolina's Medicaid agency has paid for 222 abortions during the past five years, according to a state agency.

Planned Parenthood could have performed up to two additional abortions, an S.C. House oversight panel looking into how state agencies interact with Planned Parenthood was told Wednesday.

But state Health and Human Services head Christian Soura told the panel those two payments could be medical coding errors. For example, one bill was for \$78, far less than the cost of an abortion.

Medicaid, the federal-state insurance program

FROM PAGE 3A

ABORTION

received \$297,904 from Medicaid during the past five years, generally for contraceptive-related services, including office visits, pap smears and birth control, Soura said.

Investigations were launched into Planned Parenthood clinics nationwide after videos surfaced allegedly showing staffers

for the poor, only can pay for abortions if a pregnancy was due to rape or incest and endangers the mother's life, Soura said.

The number of abortions paid for by Medicaid — \$437,361 worth during the last five years — could decrease because the state agency is investigating to ensure they comply with those federal requirements. If they do not comply, the agency could be repaid.

The cost also could increase because the agency can receive claims up to a year after a service is performed, meaning some claims still could come in.

Planned Parenthood SEE ABORTION, 6A

discussing selling fetal tissue. The S.C. House Legislative Oversight Committee agreed last month to look into state agencies' interactions with Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood has been serving South Carolinians for more than 50 years, and has a history of compliance with state and

federal regulations, said Planned Parenthood South Atlantic vice president Melissa Reed. Reed said the investigations of Planned Parenthood, requested by Gov. Nikki Haley and S.C. legislators, "were motivated by the political witch hunts that have been going on across the nation."

State Rep. Bill Taylor, R-Aiken, responded he resents the investigation being called a witch hunt. "We have the right, the responsibility and the obligation to ask how the money is being spent," Taylor said.

Reach Cope at (803) 771-8657.

S.C. Medicaid and abortions

Under federal law, Medicaid only can pay for abortions if the pregnancy was the due to rape or incest, or the mother's life is at risk.

Table with 3 columns: Year, Abortions, Medicaid's cost. Rows for 2011-2015 and Total.

S.C. Department of Health and Human Services

Title: **Majority in South Carolina backs removal of Confederate flag, but racial divide persists**  
 Author: BY SCHUYLER KROPF skropf@postandcourier.com  
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# Majority in South Carolina backs removal of Confederate flag, but racial divide persists

BY SCHUYLER KROPF  
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Two-thirds of South Carolina residents say the Legislature made the right decision to remove the Confederate battle flag from Statehouse grounds after the racially motivated fatal shooting at Emanuel AME Church, a new poll released Wednesday shows.

But it also shows there's a divide between black and white over what the flag symbolizes.

The survey, by Winthrop University in Rock Hill, found that nearly all blacks, 93 percent, thought lawmakers made the right decision in voting to move the flag from the Confederate soldiers monument outside the capitol to a Columbia museum, while a little more than half of whites, 54 percent, agreed.

The flag had flown there since 2000. Before that it had been flown atop the Statehouse dome, where it was placed in 1962 as a show of defiance to integration.

When asked if the Confederate battle flag was more a symbol of racial conflict or of Southern pride, 40 percent of those surveyed said it stood for racial conflict, while 47 percent said it stood for Southern pride.

About half of those in the poll who lean Republican said that if it were left to them, they would keep the flag at the monument on the Statehouse grounds.

The results are based on a telephone survey of 963 South Carolina residents conducted Sept. 20-27 by Winthrop's polit-

## Palmetto Politics

To stay up-to-date on South Carolina politics, go to [palmettopolitics.com](http://palmettopolitics.com) or download the **Palmetto Politics app** for iOS or Android.

ical science department, which regularly surveys South Carolinians on their political views. The margin of error is +/- 3.2 percent, giving the survey a 95 percent confidence level.

The Legislature's decision to remove the flag came in the aftermath of the killings of nine church members, including the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, who was also a state senator, at the historic Charleston church on June 17.

Gov. Nikki Haley called for the flag's removal in the days following the shooting, and lawmakers voted to take it down after the flag's defenders staged a protracted fight to save it.

## Other results

While opinions about the flag may have softened somewhat, many South Carolinians still have a lukewarm view of their political leaders, the survey found.

President Barack Obama's approval rating in South Carolina is 41 percent and remains roughly the same for the general population as it was in March, but still lags behind national approval ratings.

Meanwhile, Congress' approval rating among Palmetto

State residents continues to slide and is at 12 percent, a figure that is a little above the national opinion of Congress.

Haley has a 55 percent approval rating, nearly identical to her overall approval rating in March.

U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, who is running for the Republican presidential nomination, has a 40 percent approval rating.

The state's junior senator, Republican Tim Scott, has a 53 percent approval rating, although it's much higher among Republican respondents.

## Gay marriage

The survey also asked about the legalization of gay marriage in South Carolina, with half of the respondents saying it shouldn't be recognized as legally valid even though the U.S. Supreme Court ruled this summer that same-sex marriage is a constitutional right. Yet when asked if county clerks or probate judges in the state should be allowed to deny a marriage license to same-sex couples, only 34 percent said yes.

## State of the nation

Only a fourth of state residents said the nation is headed in the right direction.

Half of respondents believe the economy as a whole is getting worse. More than half, though, think South Carolina is moving in a positive direction, and 63 percent think the economy is either very good or fairly good.



Title: **Limehouse bringing down curtain on long legislative career**  
 Author: BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN [croldan@postandcourier.com](mailto:croldan@postandcourier.com)  
 Size: 35.65 square inch  
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289

# Limehouse bringing down curtain on long legislative career

BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN

[croldan@postandcourier.com](mailto:croldan@postandcourier.com)

COLUMBIA — Veteran Low-country lawmaker Rep. Chip Limehouse is the latest legislator to announce he won't be seeking re-election after the end of this term next year.

The Charleston Republican — who influenced the construction of many of Mount Pleasant's roads — will leave a void in the House chambers, his peers said, after serving for more than 20 years in the General Assembly.

"It's time to turn the page," Limehouse said. "Making the decision to not run again was probably one of the most difficult decisions I've had to make in my life, because my inclination is to run and run. Public service is in my DNA."

Limehouse, 53, has served as a lawmaker for most of his adult life, having been recruited by former House Speaker David Wilkins, taking the House District 110 seat from a

Democratic incumbent in 1994. Since then, Limehouse championed legislation that created the state's Infrastructure Bank, which financed the construction of the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge. It also built Mount Pleasant's major roadways.

Limehouse also served on the Infrastructure Bank's board.

Most recently, Limehouse was among those who voted for a borrowing plan that Gov. Nikki Haley slammed and ultimately killed that would have brought more than \$100 million to Low-country projects, including \$35 million for Trident Technical College's Aeronautical Training Center and \$50 million for the Medical University of South Carolina's new women's and children's hospital.

He's also sponsored controversial legislation that would increase penalties on those who perform illegal abortions,

outlaw the use of Sharia law as a defense in court, and reinforce a law preventing more states from bringing low-level radioactive waste to South Carolina.

Rep. Mike Sottile, R-Isle of Palms, who has been Limehouse's deskmate during the last seven years, said Limehouse's seat on the House's budget-writing panel gave him a "tremendous amount of influence" that the people of Charleston have benefitted from.

"His fingerprints are all over Charleston County," Sottile said. "I'm going to really hate to see him go."

Limehouse also served as chairman of the Charleston County Aviation Authority. Selling land to Boeing is one of his highlights as chairman, including a more than \$150 million makeover for the airport that included a dome design to help capture natural sunlight.

Charleston resident and Medal of Honor recipient retired Maj. Gen. James Livingston,

who worked closely with Limehouse to help allocate money toward the Patriots Point Medal of Honor Museum, said Limehouse has always had the interests of the Lowcountry in mind.

Russell Guerard, who ran against Limehouse in the Republican primary in 2014, already had announced that he would be running for the seat again.

"There's only three ways to leave the Legislature: you can either die, you can be defeated or you can resign," ex-U.S. Rep. Tommy Hartnett said. "And the latter of those three is the much better way to leave the Legislature. I admire him for doing it."

Limehouse said he'll turn his attention to his real estate business once he's out of the Legislature, but wouldn't rule out running for office again.

"This is not an end to my public service," Limehouse said.

Reach **Cynthia Roldan**  
 (843) 577-7111.



Limehouse



Title: **Statehouse leaders to ignore court's deadline for plan to fix rural schools**  
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# Statehouse leaders to ignore court's deadline for plan to fix rural schools

## Tell justices in letter that order violates S.C. Constitution

BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN  
[croldan@postandcourier.com](mailto:croldan@postandcourier.com)

COLUMBIA — Defying the state's Supreme Court, legislative leaders said Tuesday they will ignore a deadline to produce plans for providing students in impoverished rural districts with a constitutionally mandated adequate education.

Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, and House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Hartsville, fired off a letter to the Supreme Court on Tuesday addressed to Chief Justice Jean Toal stating they are "dismayed by the order's breathtaking disregard

for one of the most fundamental constitutional principles upon which our government is based."

The letter comes five days after the South Carolina Supreme Court gave lawmakers until Feb. 1 to show the court how it intended to comply with justices' landmark ruling last November in the 22-year-old Abbeville lawsuit.

In the letter, Leatherman and Lucas argue that the order violates the state's constitution by:

- requiring the court's preapproval

for the plan; ● and delegating legislative authority by requiring a report by an expert panel and involving the plaintiffs in the lawsuit in coming up with a solution.

"The Constitution is clear — only the General Assembly, as representatives of the people, has the authority to legislate," the letter said. "No other person, group or entity can be forced into the process."

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# Leaders plan to ignore deadline to fix schools

COURT, from A1

The court's Abbeville ruling late last year set no deadline, saying only that the plan should be produced "within a reasonable time." Gov. Nikki Haley, Lucas and Leatherman denounced the ruling and asked the court to reconsider its decision, but the justices refused.

Lucas then created a task force, and directed its members, which includes the plaintiff's attorney, to present recommendations when the Legislature reconvenes in January.

However, the Abbeville plaintiffs, which include the Berkeley County School District, asked the court in the summer to set a timeline.

Last week, Lucas called the deadline set by the high court "unreasonable" and "arbitrary."

On Monday, he sent a letter to Carl Epps, the attorney representing the districts which sued the state, saying that he would either have to withdraw the request for the deadline or

forfeit his seat on the task force.

"Of even greater disappointment was the Court's 3-2 vote granting your ill-conceived motion despite the tremendous progress made by the task force," Lucas said in the letter. "I, (Rep. Rita) Allison, and members of the task force believed you to be working with us in good faith. I see now that was not the case."

He asked Epps to respond by Monday because the Supreme Court set an Oct. 15 deadline to create the panel of experts which will review the plan and prepare a written report for the court.

Epps said he intends to respond to Lucas by next week, and hopes to meet with the House speaker to discuss Lucas' concerns. He added, however, that they will not dismiss the lawsuit.

"Everybody needs to take a deep breath and look at this rationally," Epps said. "The letter attempts to place blame on the courts and that's really not the case. It's clear that the

General Assembly has had two decades to address these issues and they chose not to."

If lawmakers meet the February deadline, the plaintiffs have until March 1 to respond to the Legislature's proposals. By March 15, the panel of experts has to present a written report to the court.

The court will then review the plans and issue an order that discusses whether the proposals bring the state into compliance.

As of now, South Carolina isn't facing a penalty if the Legislature fails to meet the deadline. Reached by phone, Toal said she could not comment on pending cases but acknowledged having received the letter.

In a similar case in Washington state, the high court held the Legislature in contempt and hit the state with a \$100,000-a-day fine in mid-August for not coming up with a plan to adequately fund K-12 public education, as required by a 2012 decision.

By February's deadline, the South Carolina Legislature will have had 14 months to come up with a plan, Epps said.

"Fourteen months seems to be ample time, Epps said. "If the state disagrees with the court's orders, there are legal processes clearly in place to address the grievance. You can make a motion to amend or a motion to modify and not create a constitutional crisis."

Reach **Cynthia Roldan** at (843) 577-7111.

## Poll

Do you agree with leaders of the

S.C. Legislature who say they won't abide by the state Supreme Court's order to come up with a plan to remedy disparities in public education by Feb. 1? Go to [postandcourier.com/polls](http://postandcourier.com/polls) to vote.



Lucas



Leatherman

