

Title: **Certificate of need: System does not need scrapping**  
 Author:  
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# Certificate of need: System does not need scrapping

**W**ith the need to fix state roads and reduce the inequity in public education, the Legislature may have too much on its agenda to get around to streamlining the certificate-of-need program.

But the program needs to be overhauled.

Discussion of the proposal was sparked by a recent letter from the Federal Trade Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice recommending that South Carolina repeal its laws regarding certificates of need. Gov. Nikki Haley, who supports getting rid of CON, had requested the opinions from the federal agencies.

They said the CON process creates barriers to entry and expansion of health care facilities, and allows existing providers to block competition. The agencies said the process doesn't help control costs or improve the quality of health care.

The current rules requiring an extended review process by the state Department of Health and Environmental Control, followed by appeals through the Administrative Law Court, are ridiculously unwieldy.

Last year, the full S.C. House passed a bill that would ease the rules on building or expanding hospitals and eliminate the state's oversight entirely at the start of 2018. The bill, which passed 103-1, would let existing hospitals, medical centers and nursing homes add beds within a mile of their sites.

It also would allow hospitals to expand services that already are approved under the program and remove the need to seek permission to buy costly equipment such as X-ray machines or MRI scanners.

But the bill stalled in the Senate, where its future is uncertain. The Senate's Medical Affairs subcommittee voted

this month to remove the sunset provision that would end state oversight in 2018. But the bill still must clear a number of procedural roadblocks, and it is uncertain when, if ever, it might come up for debate.

We like the idea of streamlining the process, but we could not endorse ending state oversight altogether. There are good reasons not to simply allow the free market to dictate how health care is dispersed in the state.

As officials with the S.C. Hospital Association noted, it's unfair to apply free-market rules to an industry where up to 60 percent of hospital revenue comes from federal or state sources — and those sources set the prices they pay. The association also fears that eliminating the CON process would end protection for safety-net hospitals (including the Regional Medical Center in Orangeburg) that deliver basic health care to thousands in the state.

With no regulation, we likely would see rapid expansion of health care facilities in urban areas and abandonment of rural, less-populated parts of the state. Investors inevitably would rush to build high-profit facilities, such as heart care centers, at the expense of other needs.

We also could see an abundance of shady MRI facilities with low-quality equipment providing inferior or unnecessary services. And nursing homes of questionable quality could sprout up everywhere.

If the Senate does take up this bill, we hope lawmakers will be able to strike a balance between radically changing the process and eliminating it altogether. The state needs to be able to foster competition while ensuring that all parts of the state have access to quality health care.

■ *From an editorial by The Herald of Rock Hill via The Associated Press*



Title: **Italian firm opens tire plant in Upstate**

Author:

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# Italian firm opens tire plant in Upstate

SPARTANBURG (AP) — industries. An Italian-based company Trelleborg has 52 employees at the Spartanburg plant. It expects to add nearly 100 more workers by 2018.

The Herald-Journal of Spartanburg reported that Trelleborg Wheel Systems unveiled its \$50 million plant on Wednesday. Gov. Nikki Haley says Trelleborg is the fifth international tire company in South Carolina. The state already has plants operated by Michelin, Bridgestone, Continental and Giti.



Title: **A few corrections on Gov. Nikki Haley's State of the State speech**  
 Author: By Cindi Ross Scoppe  
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# *A few corrections on Gov. Nikki Haley's State of the State speech*

By Cindi Ross Scoppe

Gov. Nikki Haley had a lot of familiar items on her State of the State brag list last week:

- "Number one in foreign investment."
- "The number one exporter of tires."
- "One of the fastest growing economies on the East Coast."
- "Thanks to your support, we changed the funding formula so that no one can ever say again that we educate children based solely on where they are born and raised."

Huh?

Did I mishear that? Did I misunderstand the change the Legislature made to the state's basic education funding formula a couple of years ago? Did the Supreme Court misunderstand it, when it continued to insist that the state was unconstitutionally failing to adequately educate children ... based on where they are born and raised?

I checked with a handful of legislators on Thursday, and while some had missed that line, one leading education advocate who is otherwise enthusiastic about Gov. Haley's public education agenda told me it jumped out at him. Ridiculous, he said.

For all the accomplishments the governor can take credit for and all the smart initiatives she proposed, there were a handful of dissonant chords in her annual address. Claims that were at best misleading. If I'm going to praise her for her smart proposals, I feel obliged to point out those problem notes.

The problem with her schools claim isn't that lawmakers didn't go along with her plan to add a poverty weighting to the funding formula - they did, and it was a long-overdue change. The problem is that she grossly overstated the effect of that change - a problem

that was compounded by her decision to appropriate the language of the legal and political argument that children in poor school districts still aren't receiving a decent education.

When you say "no one can ever say again that we educate children based solely on where they are born and raised," you're saying the problem has been solved. It hasn't been, as the governor herself implicitly acknowledged with her education proposals - particularly the plan to recruit teachers to the Corridor of Shame.

As important as it was for the state to officially acknowledge that it costs more to educate poor children than their better-off peers, simply adding that weighting didn't provide enough money to the poorest districts to address that part of the problem.

Of course, that's not the only reason changing the funding formula didn't fix those districts, and by suggesting that it did, or even could, the governor embraced the very "money is the solution" argument that she and other Republicans rightly reject. Money is a problem, but all the money in the world won't get poor children educated until we make changes in governance that will result in good teachers being willing and able to move to and remain in those schools.

The governor's next off-key claim came in her quite reasonable argument that replacing dilapidated schools in the impoverished districts is more important than constructing more college buildings. "No one can look at the tuition hikes parents and college students have seen over the last decade," she said, "and tell me that higher education doesn't have enough money."

Perhaps she's right that colleges have enough money, but her implication that they've gouged students is terribly misleading. The fact is that colleges have raised tuition as a direct result of the state defunding its colleges.

We've never adequately funded our colleges, and things only got worse after lawmakers decided that lottery scholarships were "college" funding, and scaled back on the actual funding to colleges.

But scholarships merely change the name on the check, not how much money colleges receive. So colleges had to choose between reducing quality and raising tuition; they raised tuition. During the recession, lawmakers cut funding more, and colleges raised tuition more.

The governor also presented a false impression when she rightly called out senators who have refused to pass legislation allowing an independent body to investigate their compliance with the state ethics law and requiring themselves to report the sources of their income.

"The Senate has refused to even vote on either," she said. "Repeatedly."

It's true that the Senate never voted on those two items individually. But the Senate has voted on ethics reform, and all the versions it voted on included income disclosure. And in the crucial vote in February, GOP Sens. Hugh Leatherman and Luke Rankin, the most outspoken tea-party Republicans, and all the Democrats succeeded in passing an amendment that stripped independent oversight from the ethics bill.

Some Democrats said they supported independent oversight but weren't willing to let other reforms die in order to get that. The sen-

Title: **Afewcorrectionson Gov.NikkiHaley's State of the State speech**  
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ators who worked the hardest for reform were willing to let the bill die, because they feared that if they allowed it to pass without independent oversight, it would be decades before they'd get another

chance.

That wasn't the result Gov. Haley or I or any other reformers wanted, but it was a vote. And to deny that is not just wrong; it's unwise for anyone who has any

hopes of reviving ethics reform.

*Scoppe writes editorials and columns for The State. Reach her at [cscoppe@thestate.com](mailto:cscoppe@thestate.com) follow her on Twitter @CindiScoppe.*



Title: **Senate approves Hall to lead DOT**

Author:

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## Senate approves Hall to lead DOT

State senators unanimously approved Christy Hall as head of the S.C. Department of Transportation on Thursday.

Gov. Nikki Haley appointed Hall as acting secretary after former secretary Janet Oakley resigned in June.

Haley nominated Hall to officially lead the agency in October.

Hall, 44, has worked at



Hall

the Transportation Department for more than 20 years. She led the agency through October's historic flooding, which closed 541 roads and bridges at its peak.

— CASSIE COPE

Title: **Senators set framework for road-repair deal**  
Author: BY CASSIE COPE [ccope@thestate.com](mailto:ccope@thestate.com)  
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# Senators set framework for road-repair deal

**Panel backs changes to commission that oversees state roads agency**

**Higher gas tax, driving-related fees proposed earlier this week**

BY CASSIE COPE  
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State senators laid the framework for a road-repair bill Thursday as the Senate Transportation Committee approved changing the Transportation Department's oversight.

However, critics said the proposed change will continue to blur responsibility and encourage "parochialism" on the Transportation Department

commission.

The Senate Finance Committee debated the two other key parts of a road-repair proposal earlier in the week – how much to increase the state's 16.75-cent-a-gallon gas tax and other driving fees, and how much to cut income and business taxes.

**SEE ROADS, 5A**

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## ROADS FROM PAGE 3A

Senators hope to bring the three components together in an amendment to a House-passed road-repair proposal that has a priority spot on the Senate's calendar, said state Sen. Joel Lourie, D-Richland. That amendment will emerge after the Finance Committee meets next week, Lourie said.

Senators on the transportation panel Thursday approved expanding the eight-member Transportation Department commission to 10 members. The state's 10 Councils of Government, regional planning districts, would nominate three candidates for each commission seat and the governor would choose one. That commission now is legislatively controlled.

Senators on the roads panel were divided over the proposal, voting 9-6 to approve it. That division sets up a future fight on

the Senate floor about whether the governor should have more direct control of the commission.

"The idea of transparency becomes less and less" with the Councils of Government involved, said state Sen. Larry Grooms, R-Berkeley, who voted against the proposal. Grooms, who chairs the Transportation Committee, supports having the governor directly appoint commission members.

Commissioners who represent areas of the state will feel a duty to represent their district, rather than the entire state, said state Sen. Chip Campsen, R-Charleston, who also voted against the proposal. "We're signaling to the commission parochialism is really important to us."

But state Sen. Thomas McElveen, D-Sumter, said the proposal, which he supported, was an im-

provement over the exist-

ing commission.

Commissioners now come from congressional districts that split up counties among gerrymandered lines, he said. "We want to start addressing transportation needs regionally."

McElveen also said he is wary of giving the governor control of the commission, fearing concentrating too much power in the hands of one person.

Republican Gov. Nikki Haley has pushed for more executive control over the roads agency. The House-approved road-repair bills would allow the governor to name all commission members.

Meanwhile, others in the road-repair fight want changes to the controversial S.C. Transportation Infrastructure Bank included in Transportation Department reforms.

S.C. Coastal Conservation League director Dana Beach said he is hopeful

senators will abolish the Infrastructure Bank, which borrows money to finance road projects.

Critics say the roads approved by the bank too often are political pork-barrel projects.

The Conservation League opposes new roads — including a proposed Interstate 73 to Myrtle Beach and the extension of Interstate 526 in Charleston — saying they destroy wetlands and farmland, divide communities and encourage urban sprawl.

Despite his opposition to the reform passed by his committee, Grooms said Thursday's vote represented progress. "The actions today will advance an overall roads bill."

*Cassie Cope: 803-771-8657, @cassielcope*



FILE PHOTOGRAPH

Deteriorating spots on I-77 in Lexington County

Title: **Lieutenant governor: GOP front-runner a 'thoughtful' man**  
 Author: BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com  
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## Lieutenant governor: GOP front-runner a 'thoughtful' man

BY ANDREW SHAIN  
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S.C. Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster said Thursday more people would back Donald Trump if they got to meet the Republican presidential front-runner away from the television cameras.

“(I)f you get to spend a few minutes with him, he is a thoughtful, bright, gentle, very considerate man,” McMaster told The State, a day after endorsing Trump at a Lexington

County rally. “It’s a different impression from the one you get if you just watch him in the debates or watch him on television. ... He’s not a bomb-thrower, not an impulsive man.”

McMaster’s endorsement came as a surprise. The former state attorney general, U.S. attorney and state GOP chair-

SEE MCMASTER, 8A

# MCMASTER

FROM PAGE 3A

man is one of South Carolina’s ultimate political insiders, yet he is backing Trump, who has not held elected office and is running for the White House as the anti-politician-in-chief.

“Experience in politics is not always the deciding factor,” said McMaster, who met with Trump several times backstage at his rallies. “I concluded that Donald Trump is the leader we need for this time in our history.”

Endorsing Trump could have an upside for the lieutenant governor. Being the first statewide politician to back the New York billionaire developer could land McMaster a Cabinet post or an ambassadorship in a Trump Administration, S.C. political observers said.

McMaster said he did not know if backing Trump would hurt his potential 2018 run for S.C. governor when Republican

Gov. Nikki Haley completes her final term. Many of McMaster’s top financial backers are backing former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, whose father and brother won the S.C. Republican presidential primary en route to the White House.

“You’re talking about the distant future in politics,” McMaster said.

McMaster had backed U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham before the Seneca Republican dropped out of the presidential race Dec. 21. McMaster said the other GOP White House contenders all are qualified, but he thinks Trump has the best chance to win in November’s general election.

“Donald Trump has something extra. He has an appeal to the people that is something unusual,” McMaster said. “(Former President Ronald) Reagan had an enormous appeal, but it was not the excitement of the

people you see with Donald Trump.”

The lieutenant governor already had a Trump supporter in his home. McMaster said his wife, Peggy, “fell in love when we met him in Greenville” in August.

Graham, who has been one of Trump’s harshest critics, said he was surprised by McMaster’s new 2016 favorite.

“I don’t know what Henry’s thinking, but I admire Henry McMaster,” Graham told reporters on Capitol Hill. “I think he will be helpful to Mr. Trump. He will give him legitimacy, sort of, in the establishment lane.”

After backing Graham, McMaster was expected to endorse Bush, a GOP establishment favorite who called McMaster in an attempt to win his support. “He (McMaster) saw Trump has a comfortable lead here, and it was a comfortable thing for him to do,” said Barry Wynn, a former S.C. GOP

chairman, who is state co-chair for Bush.

The lieutenant governor also said he received calls from two other establishment presidential hopefuls, Ohio Gov. John Kasich and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie.

McMaster said he called Haley, an ally, before announcing his Trump endorsement Wednesday, but he did not speak with the governor, who has criticized Trump for his combative campaigning. The governor, a favorite to make GOP vice presidential short lists, has not endorsed a candidate.

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**GRAHAM, ONE OF TRUMP'S HARSHTEST CRITICS, SAID HE WAS SURPRISED BY MCMASTER'S NEW FAVORITE.**

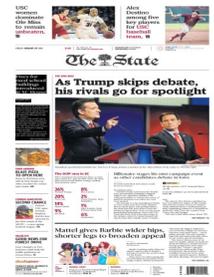
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RAINIER EHRHARDT Associated Press

Donald Trump waves after he was endorsed by S.C. Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster (right) during a campaign stop Wednesday at Harmon's Tree Farm in Gilbert.

Title: **Fixes for rural school buildings introduced in SC House**  
 Author: BY JAMIE SELF [jself@thestate.com](mailto:jself@thestate.com)  
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# Fixes for rural school buildings introduced in SC House

BY JAMIE SELF

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A bill aimed at committing state money to helping impoverished school districts replace or repair aging facilities was among eight proposals introduced Thursday in the S.C. House.

## SCHOOLS FROM PAGE 1A

month for the state to do more to improve K-12 public school buildings, some crumbling from years of neglect.

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley has proposed borrowing up to \$200 million a year for school facilities. That would create a new source of money for school districts. Now responsible for building and maintaining their own schools, districts in impoverished, rural areas often struggle to raise enough money just to replace roofs, much less renovate schools.

The proposal aimed at improving school facilities, sponsored by House Education Committee chairwoman Rita Allison, R-Spartanburg, would create an authority that could borrow money on the state's behalf to spend on school facilities.

The bill does not specify how the state would pay for the program, how

Another bill would allow the state to take control of a school district that is failing financially. Under current law, the state has that power only if a district is failing

academically.

The facilities proposal follows calls from the governor and state schools chief this

**SEE SCHOOLS, 6A**

much it would spend or how the money would be distributed to school districts. Those details will be worked out this session, Allison said, adding she has asked for the money to be committed annually.

"This would not be a one-year, two-year situation," she said.

The bill lays the foundation for allowing school districts that cannot afford to repay loans to receive direct aid from the state.

Districts in better financial shape could borrow money for building work, Allison said. To qualify for state assistance, all districts would need to undergo an efficiency study identifying ways they can save money.

They also will have to report their building maintenance plans.

The proposal also calls for school districts to get more state money if they

consolidate and are able to save money on operations costs.

Thursday's introduction of legislation comes after a House education task force spent a year coming up with proposals to improve the state's K-12 public schools, especially those in impoverished, rural areas.

Not all of the eight bills introduced Thursday immediately were available for review.

According to a summary of the proposals, some of the legislation would put into law S.C. Department of Education initiatives already in motion, including providing technical assistance to districts that do not have expertise on their staffs.

The governor and legislators have been under pressure to answer an S.C. Supreme Court order to improve the state's schools. In 2014, the court said South Carolina's schools were un-

constitutional because they do not provide an adequate education. The court has asked for an update this summer on what the state is doing to improve those schools.

"The Abbeville decision brought necessary attention to the critical state of South Carolina's education delivery system," House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, said in a statement after the bills were introduced.

Lucas was referring to a court ruling in a case where more than 30 impoverished, rural districts — including Abbeville — sued the state in 1993 for more money.

"At the end of the day, our job is to provide school districts and teachers with the tools they need to give every child the opportunity to succeed," he said.

Title: **Fixesfor rural school buildings introduced inSCHouse**  
Author: BYJAMIE SELF jself@thestate.com  
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File photograph THE STATE

First day of school at Ben Lippen in the Midlands in 2015.

Title: **Flooded farmers gain support from House panel**  
 Author: BY SAMMY FRETWELL sfretwell@thestate.com  
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# Flooded farmers gain support from House panel

House committee votes to establish fund to help flooded farmers

Amount and source still under discussion

BY SAMMY FRETWELL  
 sfretwell@thestate.com

With torrential rains falling last October, Jeremy Cannon watched helplessly as water flooded the fields of cotton, tobacco and soybeans he had tended carefully through the summer.

His Clarendon County farm was washing away — and so were the profits he needed to make ends meet. When the rain finally stopped, there wasn't much left to harvest. Cannon figures he lost nearly \$400,000, a staggering amount that has made it hard to pay off farm loans and prepare for the 2016 planting season.

"We need help to save our farms and save our communities," Cannon told legislators Thursday.

Cannon, 34, is one of thousands of farmers across South Carolina who could receive benefits under a farm-aid plan a House budget panel approved Thursday. The House Ways and Means subcommittee agreed to establish a fund for farmers who need assistance in recovering from a flood that hit while many of them prepared to harvest crops.

The amount and source of money for the fund have not been finalized, and the bill would need approval from the House and Senate at a time when the state is grappling with other costs, such as road repair and dam recon-

struction, that resulted from the Oct. 4 flood.

Gov. Nikki Haley, who could veto the bill, also has declined to seek some federal money for farmers, saying she didn't want to single out one industry over another. She has said farms already are subsidized by the government in ways other businesses are not.

But boosters of a state fund said it's worthwhile because farmers put food on the table. Much of the money could come from a more than \$80 million state savings account established for unexpected needs, said Rep. Brian White, an Anderson Republican who chairs the

House Ways and Means Committee.

"We are trying to give them a hand up," White said.

The fall flood caused an estimated \$400 million in losses for South Carolina farmers. Testimony lawmakers heard Thursday indicated crop insurance wasn't adequate to defray unusually heavy losses.

The bill says the state would provide up to 20 percent of the money lost by each farmer who can verify his or her crop losses as a result of the flood. The bill caps the amount of the grants at \$100,000 per farmer per disaster. A seven-member board would oversee the program.

Title: **Bill to help rural schools introduced**  
 Author: BY JAMIE SELF [jself@thestate.com](mailto:jself@thestate.com)  
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## STATE

# Bill to help rural schools introduced

BY JAMIE SELF  
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## COLUMBIA

A bill aimed at committing state money to helping impoverished school districts replace or repair aging facilities was among eight proposals introduced Thursday in the S.C. House.

Another bill would allow the state to take control of a school district that is failing financially. Under current law, the state has that power only if a district is failing academically.

The facilities proposal follows calls from the governor and state schools chief this month for the state to do more to improve K-12 public school buildings, some crumbling from years of neglect.

Gov. Nikki Haley has proposed borrowing up to \$200 million a year for school facilities. That would create a new source of money for school districts. Now responsible for building and maintaining their own schools, districts in impoverished, rural areas often struggle to raise enough money just to replace roofs, much less renovate schools.

The proposal aimed at improving school facilities, sponsored by House Education Committee

chairwoman Rita Allison, R-Spartanburg, would create an authority that could borrow money on the state's behalf to spend on school facilities.

The bill does not specify how the state would pay for the program, how much it would spend or how the money would be distributed to school districts. Those details will be worked out this session, Allison said, adding she has asked for the money to be committed annually.

"This would not be a one-year, two-year situation," she said.

The bill lays the foundation for allowing school districts that cannot afford to repay loans to receive direct aid from the state.

Districts in better financial shape could borrow money for building work, Allison said. To qualify for state assistance, all districts would need to undergo an efficiency study identifying ways they can save money. They also will have to report their building maintenance plans.

The proposal also calls for school districts to get more state money if they consolidate and are able to save money on operations costs.



Title: **Bill aims to train students, unemployed for available jobs**  
 Author: SEANNAADCOX Associated Press  
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# Bill aims to train students, unemployed for available jobs

**SEANNA ADCOX**

*Associated Press*

COLUMBIA — South Carolina would pay for high school students and the unemployed to train for jobs available locally under legislation that overwhelmingly passed the House.

The bill approved 106-5 Wednesday expands dual-enrollment opportunities for high school students so they can take courses that count toward their diploma and a technical certificate or an associate degree. It also provides scholarships to the state's unemployed so they can train for a job in their area.

Ways and Means Chairman Brian White, the bill's sponsor, said South Carolina's future depends on all businesses, whether they're being recruited to the state or have been here for decades, being able to hire locally. The goal is to match training with businesses' workforce needs.

"If we can't do that as a state, we need to pack up our tent and head home. We'll be dead in the water. This is something vastly needed," said White, R-Anderson.

Before the vote, the state's business, school and agency leaders filled the Statehouse lobby to show their support.

Although the state's unemployment rate stood at 5.5 percent in December, about 124,000 people are still out of work despite 60,000 job openings statewide, Gov. Nikki Haley said.

"There is no reason we can't connect the dots," she said, touting the businesses recruited to the state during her tenure. "Those jobs don't mean anything if it's not our South Carolinians getting those jobs. ... We need to make sure everyone who wants a job gets a job."

The cost of the "Pathways Initiative" is unclear.

Several counties are piloting the program this year with \$5 million from the state. White said more money is needed but the amount will be part of the budget debate.

The legislation creates a council to coordinate all workforce training offered by various state agencies. Its responsibilities will include surveying businesses to de-

termine their hiring needs and working with technical colleges to fill in any gaps.

The council would also dole out tuition scholarships for adults who need schooling to get a job, as well as grants to pay for books and other fees they can't otherwise afford.

"If you want to get a certificate to be a welder, it's expensive. We're trying to remove hurdles for folks," White said.

State schools Superintendent Molly Spearman was among those applauding the legislation. Earlier this month, she asked legislators to pay for dual-enrollment classes. Students often must pay out of pocket to take a technical college course, which poor students can't afford, she said.

"Many of our students now in high school are graduating with two-year degrees. They're ready to go to work," she said Wednesday. "Many are coming out with industry certifications. We need to give them more opportunity for that."