



**“When you come Tuesday, bring your pajamas.”**

*- Senator Hugh Leatherman to members of the Senate regarding buckling down as we approach the end of the legislative session*

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## Gas Tax Debate Heats Up

For the second day in a row on Thursday, Senator Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, held the floor of the Senate, filibustering a proposal to spend \$85 million from the capital reserve fund. Davis argued that money and most of the estimated \$400 million in new state revenues expected to be added to the state’s general fund budget this week should be spent on roads, eliminating the need for a gas tax hike. According to Davis, the proposed 12 cents per gallon increase on the gas tax is completely unnecessary, even though the state’s current 16.75 cents per gallon gas tax is the third lowest in the nation, and the state’s elected lawmakers need to better prioritize spending. Other legislators don’t see eye to eye with Senator Davis and have said diverting the proposed funds to roads would leave other agencies that have seen drastic funding cuts during the Great Recession wanting. With the time in the regular legislative session running down, those lawmakers say a gas tax increase is essential to provide stable, long-term revenues to the state Department of Transportation to address South Carolina’s crumbling infrastructure.

## DHEC Director Clears Hurdle in Confirmation Process

Former Duke Energy executive Catherine Heigel has moved closer to becoming the director at the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, one of the state’s largest agencies with 3,417 employees. Heigel gained support Thursday from a Senate screening panel after it took them less than an hour for to approve Heigel for the director’s job, a completely opposite environment than the last nominee, Eleanor Kitzman, faced.

Heigel told senators that she has no financial interests in any power company that would cause a conflict in her role as DHEC director and that she will resign her current position as a Santee Cooper board member. She also said that she would recuse herself from any matters at DHEC that would appear to be a conflict with her past as a power company official. Heigel won the DHEC board’s nomination last month after beating out a field of nearly 100, and told lawmakers her goal will be to make the agency more transparent and efficient. Her confirmation now moves to the full Senate for approval.

## Governor Haley to Host Presidential Candidate Forum

Governor Nikki Haley and former U.S. Senator Jim DeMint have announced they will lead a 2016 Republican presidential candidate forum on September 18, 2015 at the Bon Secours Wellness Arena in Greenville. The event will be held by a part of the Heritage Foundation, which DeMint leads, called the Heritage Action for America. According to DeMint, the questions will focus on health care, education, energy, and foreign policy. Despite its appearance, the event will not be a debate, and each candidate is expected to appear on stage one at a time. A large number of candidates are expected to attend the event as a way to try to connect with South Carolina’s voters before the “First in the South” primary. With the exception of the 2012 election, the winner of the South Carolina primary has gone on to win the Republican presidential nomination since the early 1980s.

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