



“I know many of you are going to the State House, which I love. Just make sure you take a good shower when you leave.”

- Governor Nikki Haley’s comment to a group in Columbia which inflamed legislators

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SC State “Begs” Senate

South Carolina State’s acting President Franklin Evans was “pleading, begging and asking for assistance” from lawmakers last Tuesday in a Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee meeting. Mr. Evans assumed the temporary leadership role after school trustees voted to fire former President Thomas Elzey two weeks ago. The fiscally embattled university’s president asked lawmakers for \$23.5 million to eliminate the school’s anticipated deficit as of June 30. As it stands now, the deficit is around \$16 million, but the school’s bills are expected to increase through the end of this fiscal year. The deficit includes a \$6 million state loan and an excess of \$10 million in unpaid bills. President Evans said that SC State has trimmed its faculty and staff costs and cut some academic programs but is worried that will not be enough to save the school without additional state money. According to President Evans, employment at the University has fallen by 15% in the past year and full time faculty, which decreased from 199 to 175 in the last year, could dip to 150 by the time classes start this fall. Although the university has obvious financial problems, there may be a bigger issue according to members of the Senate subcommittee. Subcommittee Chairman John Courson said losing accreditation when a review committee comes to evaluate the school next month could be worse than not receiving the money for the school. A vote on the school’s accreditation status is expected some point this June.

Search for a DHEC Director Extended

As of now, over seventy people have applied to replace Catherine Templeton as the Director of the Department of Health and Environmental Control after Governor Haley’s longtime friend, Eleanor Kitzman, withdrew her name from consideration in February. Originally, the search for a new director was scheduled to end on Thursday of last week, but the outside search firm has requested to extend the deadline until April 3 according to Cassandra Harris, the spokeswoman for DHEC. Ms. Harris said final candidates will be considered by the board on April 20 and that the agency still intends to submit its nominee to the Senate for final approval by May 1. The position, which pays between \$154,879 and \$197,485 a year with state benefits, is currently being filled by Marshall Taylor, a DHEC attorney. DHEC is not a cabinet agency, but its governing board members, who select the director, are chosen by the governor.

Execution Drugs

With media attention on botched executions in recent years, a European Union embargo on the export of key drugs, and the refusal of major pharmaceutical companies to sell them, the nation’s predominant method of capital punishment, lethal injection, is becoming increasingly hard to perform. Texas, the most prolific of death-penalty states, has only one dose of its preferred drug pentobarbital remaining. South Carolina has run out of the same drug and cannot find anyone willing to sell more. State legislatures across the country have debated the topic with the Utah legislature approving a bill that would reintroduce firing squads, Alabama’s House of Representatives voting to authorize the electric chair if new drugs cannot be found, and Oklahoma state legislators discussing reintroducing the gas chamber. South Carolina legislators have begun debating the issue as well, with a bill in both chambers that would require the identifying information of a person or entity that participated in the planning or administration of an execution to be confidential without exception. However, last Thursday the Corrections and Penology Committee voted 7-7 on the Senate version of the bill, which prevented it from passing and effectively killed it. Voting against it were Democrats who thought condemned inmates deserved to know who makes the drugs that would be used to kill them and Republicans who thought the state should wait for similar legal challenges to be resolved elsewhere first. The proposal may be considered again, though, as Senator Mike Fair (R-Greenville) is trying to get the measure passed as part of the budget, and the House bill has yet to be debated.

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