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& LOBBYIST RATINGS PAGE 10

★
Southern Political Report
MAGAZINE
SUMMER 2015



THE
South's Clout
IN CONGRESS



ARTICLES & FEATURES

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Georgia Rep. Tom Price; Mississippi Sen. Thad Cochran

BOTTOM ROW L-R Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell; Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul;
Louisiana Rep. Steve Scalise; Georgia Sen. Johnny Isakson


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PUBLISHER & EDITOR
PHIL KENT
PHIL@INSIDERADVANTAGE.COM

CHAIRMAN & FOUNDING PUBLISHER
MATT TOWERY

PUBLISHER EMERITUS
HASTINGS WYMAN

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
LOUIE HUNTER

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
PATRICK HICKEY
PHICKEY@INSIDERADVANTAGE.COM

STAFF WRITERS
JENNIFER HAZELTON
PATRICK HICKEY
BAKER OWENS
GARY REESE

CONTRIBUTING WRITER
JERRY WOODRUFF

ADVERTISING & SALES
PATTI PEACH
PPEACH@INSIDERADVANTAGE.COM

MARKETING REPRESENTATIVE
MELANIE DOBBINS
MDOBBINS@INSIDERADVANTAGE.COM

DESIGN & LAYOUT
BURTCH HUNTER DESIGN

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A note from publisher **Phil Kent**



Rating firms and lobbyists tricky, but a service

Our founding publisher Matt Towery, who once served in the Georgia legislature, recently observed that our world has gotten so complex that modern-day responsible governance isn't possible without a professional corps of lobbyists knowledgeable about specific public policy areas. All too often, in many states, lawmakers don't have the staff needed to properly research issues. Of course, one doesn't always have to agree with a lobbyist's research and conclusion on behalf of a client or cause, but an elected representative should at least consider all arguments. Research on public policy issues done by think tanks—spanning the political left to the right—is also valuable to elected officials as well as to lobbyists and those in the media who shape public opinion.

Yes, there's a notion by some that so-called "special interest" lobbyists shouldn't be allowed to operate, or that they aren't needed. But look at it this way: The average person can't meet with a local, state or federal representative very much, if at all. So that's why all sorts of individuals ranging from doctors and gun owners to veterans and senior citizens join associations that retain lobbyists who protect members' vital interests. That often means advancing, amending or opposing legislation.

Rating top governmental affairs firms and lobbyists in order of distinction is a thorny enterprise. But *The Southern Political Report* believes it is a service to our readers to attempt to rank the top government affairs firms and lobbyists who labor diligently in the legislative vineyards. After all, these men and women shape public policy all over the South. That's why we regularly talk to various movers-and-shakers in 13 Southern states "in the know." Some are accomplished lobbyists them-

selves, or they are the clients big and small that they serve. They know who the best are and, with this issue, now you will know who they are!

We especially appreciate the positive reader feedback on our "SEC Southern primary" article in our winter issue. *SPR* was out there early emphasizing how important the Southern March 1 primaries will be to the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates. (For the GOP, the March 1 Southern primaries award presidential convention delegates proportionally depending on how well the candidates do; after March 15, there will be winner-take-all primaries.) In this issue, of course, we continue to write about 2016 presidential campaign developments. And, on a personal note, I enjoyed researching and writing this issue's feature on "the South's clout in Congress." It's good to know, or to be reminded, who our influential lawmakers are in Washington, D.C.

Phil Kent



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Why the South Will Decide

THE GOP & DEMOCRATIC NOMINATIONS IN 2016

BY MATT TOWERY

For the first time in decades, the South will truly decide the Republican presidential nominee. The region might also seal the deal for a Democrat as well.

Ironically, it did so in 2008 on the Democratic side to little notice. In that year Hillary Clinton was the odds-on favorite to win the Democratic nomination. But in late 2007 a star by the name of Oprah Winfrey decided to appear at the premier college football stadium in South Carolina. That set the South on fire for Barack Obama, and that was, as they say, “all she wrote.”

Obama won in Iowa, lost to Clinton in New Hampshire, but carried South Carolina and went on to a Democratic nomination and the presidency.

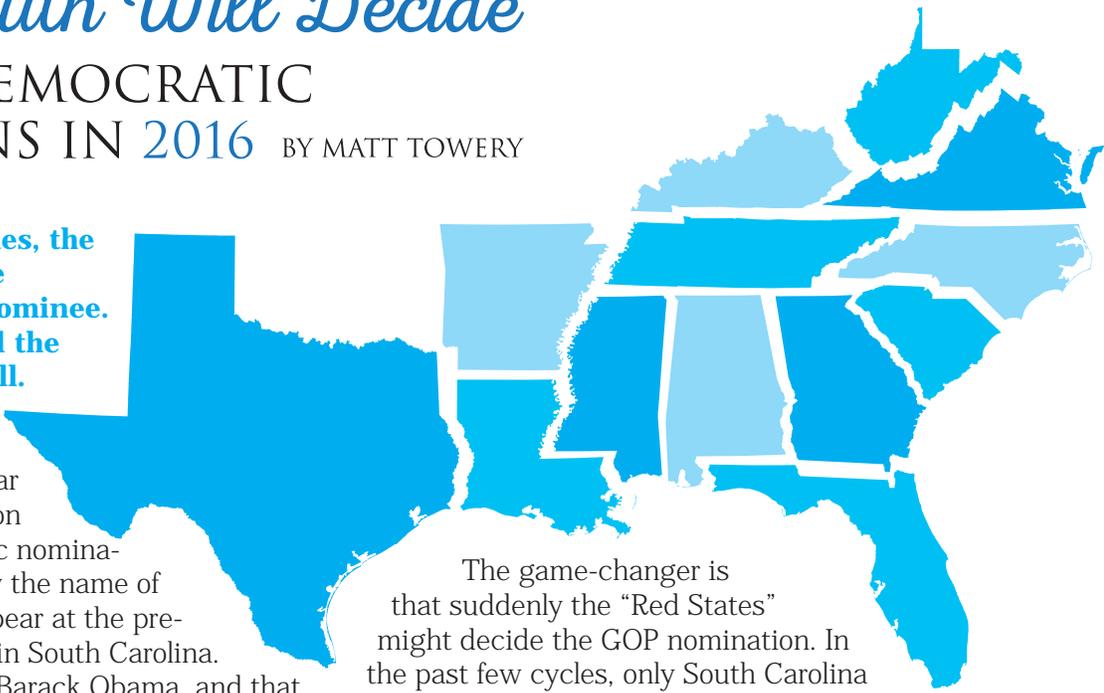
The difference in 2008 was that few Southern states really played a role in the nomination of either Obama or John McCain in that year. This year, the primary and caucus schedules are truly different. And the South has truly risen again!

After Iowa and New Hampshire, and a few of the beaten path contests, the South will loom as the big prize for the highly competitive GOP battle for the nomination. Yes, South Carolina will loom large, but it may not be dispositive. In 2012 Newt Gingrich won that state’s primary, but was destroyed in a Florida primary that took place just a week later.

On March 1 at least six Southern states will hold simultaneous primaries. That is big. That in fact it is huge, given that the South is the modern heart and soul of the GOP.

Most importantly, these Southern states will be choosing their preference for the GOP nominee before their “sister” state of Florida. That calendar change is a big one, making states like Georgia and the others more important. But it’s still guaranteeing their neighbor, Florida, the final deciding blow in the nomination process.

That means a lot. Iowa in 2008 went for Mike Huckabee. But by the time the Florida primary came along John McCain had secured the support of then-GOP Gov. Charlie Crist. Crist, who was the super popular Republican governor, and his endorsement undoubtedly gave McCain the push he needed to become the Republican nominee.



The game-changer is that suddenly the “Red States” might decide the GOP nomination. In the past few cycles, only South Carolina from the region played a significant role in the nominating process. With Florida coming immediately after the South Carolina contest in recent presidential contests, Florida’s huge delegate count basically sealed the deal for the Republican nomination.

But with races for the nomination of both parties highly fluid, the South has reliable and identifiable demographic and philosophical groups that can be moved to determine a nomination.

On the GOP side, “Trump Fever” took hold early and stronger than in any other section of the nation. There is a large segment of GOP populists who in the past were misidentified as Tea Party members. They are going early on for Trump’s take-no-prisoners style and his willingness to confront the Politically Correct police in the media. Also look for at least one GOP contender to grab hold of the region’s hugely influential evangelical vote. In recent years their voice has been stifled by a nomination schedule that made their vote count too little and too late.

On the Democratic side the key to win many of the Southern states will be an ability to capture the vote of African-Americans. States such as South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama have seen their Democratic primary election makeup skew heavily towards black voters as rural and ex-urban whites moved to the GOP.

Can Clinton reclaim her husband’s magic with African-Americans? Or will President Obama give a nod in the direction of a candidate of his preference? If he were to do so, his support would benefit that candidate when the South starts voting next March.

Matt Towery is the chairman of InsiderAdvantage and The Southern Political Report. He is also author of the new book Newsvesting: Use News and Opinion to Grow Your Personal Wealth.

👍 Winners & Losers 👎

& in play ✂️

👍 Whether he loses or wins the GOP nomination next summer, GOP Presidential candidate Donald Trump wins when it comes to drawing a crowd. The billionaire real estate businessman drew about 30,000 people, including U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Al, to an August 21 Mobile, Alabama, rally. He narrowly edged out Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders for the largest crowd of the 2016 campaign season so far. The rally was held at Ladd-Peebles Stadium, which hosts the Senior Bowl and GoDaddy.com college football games. **WINNING**

✂️ Southern states took controversial steps to either remove or protect the iconic Confederate battle flag this summer. Most noteworthy was the South Carolina legislature's flag removal from a memorial on statehouse grounds after the killings of a lawmaker and others in a black Charleston church by a white racist photographed with the flag. In response, Alabama's Gov. Robert Bentley removed four different Rebel banners from a Capitol memorial while Georgia's governor affirmed that state law protects the mammoth Stone Mountain Confederate carving of Confederate heroes Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. There is no appetite to change that Georgia law, which also requires the park to stock and sell Confederate memorabilia. Mississippi's Gov. Phil Bryant weighed in, saying he respects the result of a 2001 referendum when voters opted 2 to 1 to keep the battle flag as part of the state flag. And North Carolina and Virginia are embroiled in controversy with the Sons of Confederate Veterans on whether the group can pay to have its logo, which includes the battle flag, on state-issued driver's license plates. **IN PLAY**

👍 U.S. Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., has promised to fully pay for changes to his state's presidential nominating process that would allow him to seek two different offices in 2016. That helped convince his state GOP to change Kentucky's presidential primary to a caucus system instead. By holding a caucus, in which voters organize by local precinct and choose their preferred candidate, Paul circumvents the state's prohibition that candidates cannot appear on the ballot for two offices at the same time. Now the presidential candidate has "Plan B" in place: He can also run for re-election to his Senate seat in 2016. **WINNING**

✂️ An August special legislative session in Florida tasked with redrawing the state's congressional map ended in inconclusive acrimony, creating uncertainty for candidates running in 2016. The session was called after the state Supreme Court decided that the existing map of 27 congressional districts was unconstitutional. It ruled that the legislature violated constitutional amendments that prohibited legislators from drawing maps that intentionally favored incumbents or a political party. The district that could be altered the most is held by Democratic U.S. Rep.

Corrinne Brown. The district has a large number of black voters who vote heavily Democrat and thus help the incumbent—but that dynamic also ensures that surrounding districts tilt more to Republicans. The court said her district had to be redrawn in an east-west configuration, thus prompting Brown to sue to protect its present north-south contours. **IN PLAY**

👎 A handful of Southern candidates looked to make big noise in the 2016 GOP Presidential Primary, but with the summer waning it looks like the end may be fast approaching for the majority of them. South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, and former Texas Governor Rick Perry all had high hopes for 2016, but lack of traction and the rise of Trump see all four running low on money and even lower in the polls. **LOSING**

✂️ President Obama's controversial Iran nuclear deal has many Southern Democrats in a tight spot, particularly in Florida with its high Jewish population. While in most of the country support for the deal is divided neatly down party lines, in the Sunshine State things are a bit more complicated. Democratic U.S. Reps. Ted Deutch and Alcee Hastings have come out against the deal while, as this is written, House members Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Lois Frankel, Alan Grayson and Patrick Murphy have yet to make their stances known. In fact only Democratic U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, secure in the seat he's held since 2001, has openly announced his backing of the plan. **IN PLAY**

✂️ As Donald Trump continues to soak up the headlines, one Southern presidential contender is positioning himself in the background to make a major push in the polls. Texas Senator Ted Cruz, lauded as the anti-establishment darling of the 2016 race before a certain reality-TV star made an appearance, has stolen the show at several conservative events this summer including the RedState Gathering in Atlanta and the Americans for Prosperity summit in Columbus, Ohio. The Tea Party fire may have cooled off in recent years but Cruz is biding his time, stoking the coals that remain as Trump continues his assault on the establishment. **IN PLAY**

👎 New Hampshire's U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders draws big crowds in his Democratic presidential primary bid, but will he struggle to gain traction in the South? Hillary Clinton may be losing ground due to her email-server scandal but heavy name recognition, history in Arkansas where husband Bill was governor, and familiarity with black voters gives her a big edge over the 72-year-old self-declared socialist. Despite a long history in civil-rights, gaining support in the South— particularly from black voters—remains an uphill battle for Sanders and his heavily grass-roots campaign. **LOSING**

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Southern Political Report **Ranks**

THE SOUTH'S TOP GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS FIRMS *and* LOBBYISTS



Our rankings are based on the results of an online survey sent to lobbyists and government affairs specialists across 13 Southern states. In addition, top lawyers and lobbyists were consulted to make sure the rankings for each Southern state are as comprehensive and accurate as possible.

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- MAYNARD, COOPER, & GALE PC
- BALCH & BINGHAM LLP
- BRADLEY ARANT BOULT CUMMINGS LLP
- BUTLER SNOW LLP

SMALL FIRMS

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- FINE GEDDIE & ASSOCIATES
- DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS
- CAPITOL RESOURCES OF ALABAMA LLC
- FRANKLIN RESOURCES GROUP

ASSOCIATIONS

- BUSINESS COUNCIL OF ALABAMA
- MANUFACTURE ALABAMA
- ALABAMA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION
- ALABAMA LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES
- ALABAMA FOREST OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

ARKANSAS

LAW FIRMS

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- FRIDAY, ELDREDGE AND CLARK LLP
- WRIGHT, LINDSEY & JENNINGS LLP
- KUTAK ROCK, LLP
- ROSE LAW FIRM

SMALL FIRMS

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- NOBLE STRATEGIES
- MULLENIX AND ASSOCIATES
- PHILLIPS MANAGEMENT AND CONSULTING SERVICE, INC.
- CAPITOL ADVISORS GROUP

ASSOCIATIONS

- ARKANSAS STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
- ASSOCIATION OF ARKANSAS COUNTIES
- ARKANSAS HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
- ARKANSAS POULTRY FEDERATION
- ARKANSAS WATER AND WASTEWATER MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

FLORIDA

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- GRAYROBINSON PA
- HOLLAND AND KNIGHT LLP
- AKERMAN LLP
- GREENBERG TRAURIG LLP

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- CAPITAL CITY CONSULTING
- CORCORAN AND JOHNSTON
- THE RUBIN GROUP

ASSOCIATIONS

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- FLORIDA HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION
- ORGANIZED FISHERMEN OF FLORIDA
- ARC OF FLORIDA

GEORGIA

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- FROST BROWN TODD LLC
- **STOLL KEENON OGDEN, PLLC**
- WYATT TARRANT & COMBS LLP

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- GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES
- **CAPITOL SOLUTIONS**
- COMMONWEALTH ALLIANCES

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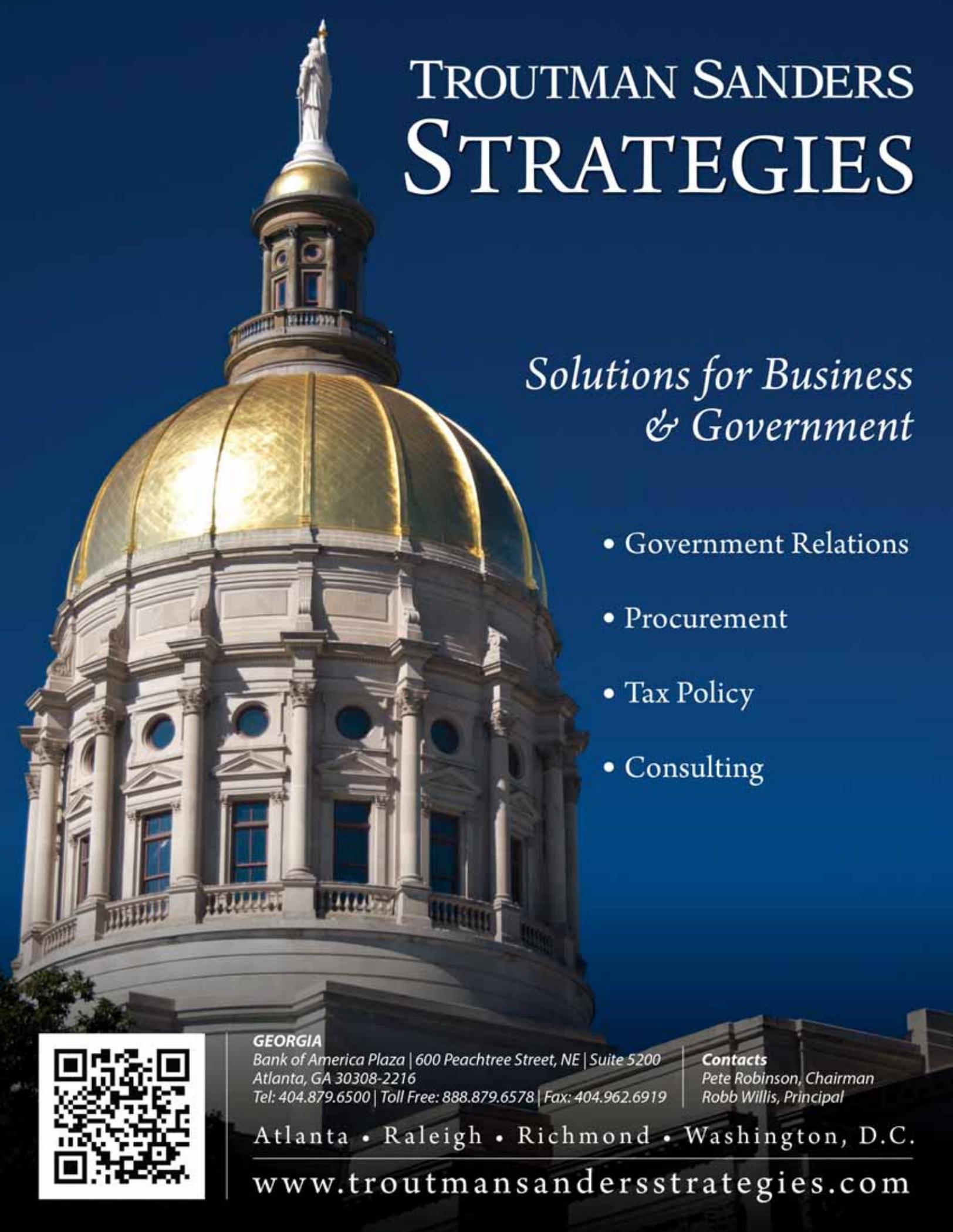
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Contacts

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SPOTLIGHT on South Carolina Attorney General ALAN WILSON by Baker Owens



T

his is an interesting summer regarding major U.S. Supreme Court cases. On June 25 the Court ruled in favor of the Obama administration in *King v. Burwell*, which enshrined the federal exchange subsidies of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) into law. On June 26, in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, it ruled that the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause both affirmed a fundamental "right" to marry for same-sex couples.

It was during that time that South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson sat down with *The Southern Political Report* for an interview on various topics—the tragic shooting in Charleston, the Confederate flag, gay marriage and the ACA lawsuit.

On June 17 at the Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, one of the oldest black churches in the South, nine people including state Sen. Clementa Pinckney were killed in a shooting by a white youth who hoped to trigger a race war. Far from starting such a war, Charleston rallied around the victims and their families and did its best to support them. "If you look at all the tragedies that have happened, from Ferguson up to Baltimore, New York and other areas of the country, for various reasons, there has been the opposite reaction. There has been violence and protests and riots," said Wilson. "In South Carolina, we're not perfect. But I think South Carolina has done an amazing job of coming together and when people saw those family members somehow forgiving that person who took their loved one's life and the outpouring of love and support across racial lines and ethnic lines and political lines."

One issue that attracted immediate attention after the shootings was the prominence of the Confederate flag on state-house grounds flying by a Confederate memorial monument. Although the issue was in the purview of the state legislature, the attorney general saw the issue in plain terms for healing in Charleston. "People coming together. That is a more powerful symbol than any monument or flag," said Wilson.

"I know there are people out there that see the flag differently. To them it is not the symbol of racism and the things that we all know from history. It is something that they are proud of. I don't want to castigate them for that, but for too many of our citizens it is that."

Regarding *King v. Burwell*, Wilson took issue with ACA supporters. "You see how the issue has been framed by people on the other side trying to paint us as trying to keep people from getting healthcare. That is not the issue; the issue is whether the executive branch has the power to tax and spend without authorization from Congress." Wilson's feeling is that Congress wrote the law in a way to incentivize states to spend money to support the exchanges. "The federal exchanges were set up as a response to that and were a twist of the law. A penalty is another word for tax. When you penalize a business for not providing healthcare because the subsidies are no longer there, that's a tax. But Congress is supposed to be the only branch that can impose a tax.



ALAN WILSON

When the Supreme Court decision came down, Wilson's office put out a statement reiterating its opposition. "Today, a majority of the U.S. Supreme Court interpreted the plain meaning of this law in the broadest and most abstract way possible in order to save a broken government-run healthcare system. I agree with Justice Scalia, as he stated in his dissenting opinion, 'Today's opinion changes the usual rules of statutory interpretation for the sake of the Affordable Care Act.' Even Chief Justice Roberts conceded that these arguments were strong."

"The way the ACA has unfolded, it sets a very dangerous precedent, this decision could come back and haunt them (supporters) in the future when there is another law that is being illegally implemented and not something they agree with politically," he said.

After the gay marriage decision, Wilson worries about the impact on the 10th Amendment restricting the federal government to only those powers delegated by the Constitution. "We have seen the U.S. Supreme Court deliver a devastating blow to the Tenth Amendment, which was designed by our founders to protect the authority of individual states."

Now, however, Wilson has another cause. "It is imperative for us to protect the religious freedom upon which our country was founded. No individual or faith-based institution should be forced to violate deeply held religious beliefs."

Furthermore, one of Wilson's proudest accomplishments is the implementation of a human trafficking law allowing the state to better combat this often-overlooked issue. One of the things the statute did was allow the state grand jury to have the authority to go after human traffickers—which it previously could not do. Now, the state treats them like drug trafficking rings, gangs, or child abusers.

Wilson's office continues to work on identifying the entire scope of the human trafficking problem—to better prosecute, how to better support and serve victims and how to develop educational programs to prevent human trafficking from ever happening. "People still think of it as something that happens in a far off distant land, and the attorney general's office is working on breaking down those barriers and getting the schools and churches involved."

He also says that illegal immigrants who may know of a trafficking situation will not report a problem due to the fear of being deported or getting in trouble. Wilson notes that the statute allows for persons reporting a trafficking crime to get a temporary visa, thus incentivizing illegals to be unafraid to report situations.

As he serves in the first year of his second term, rumors are circulating about Wilson's political future. A future gubernatorial race, perhaps? But he refused to speculate, saying he is 100% focused on being attorney general.

Baker Owens is a staff writer for Southern Political Report magazine

Charleston

HISTORY, INDUSTRY AND TRAGEDY

by Hastings Wyman

South Carolina's history— as noted by U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, a Republican and an African American— is “rich and provocative.” That is a description that more than fits Charleston, once one of the nation's richest cities and the place where “provocative” got its start with the firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861 by Charlestonians, including cadets from The Citadel.

Charlestonians are duly proud of their heritage. They call it the Holy City, located where the Ashley and Cooper Rivers come together to form the Atlantic Ocean. And they make genial fun of themselves, comparing Charlestonians to the Chinese: They eat rice, drink tea and worship their ancestors.

In addition, this historic city is one of the fastest growing business centers in the nation, with manufacturing, shipping, and hi-tech start-ups joining a major tourist destination.

THE AME CHURCH MASSACRE

Over-shadowing the charm and capitalism of Charleston, the city was brutally brought up short on June 17 when an avowed racist drove down from Lexington County in mid-state and murdered nine worshipers, including the minister, state Sen. Clementa Pinckney, at the city's most prominent black church, Emanuel AME Church. It was an event that will forever affect Charlestonians, black and white.

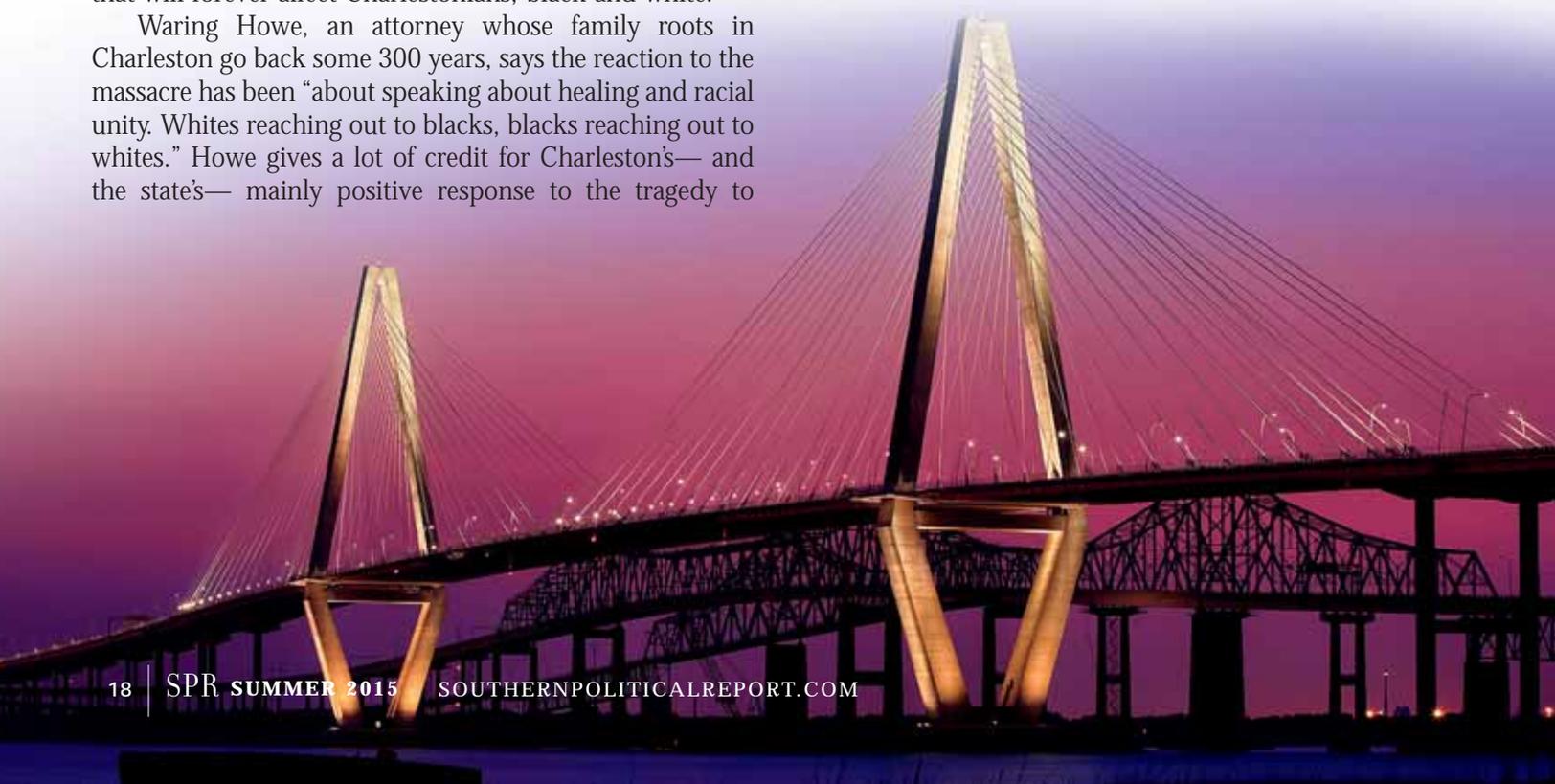
Waring Howe, an attorney whose family roots in Charleston go back some 300 years, says the reaction to the massacre has been “about speaking about healing and racial unity. Whites reaching out to blacks, blacks reaching out to whites.” Howe gives a lot of credit for Charleston's— and the state's— mainly positive response to the tragedy to

Mayor Joe Riley (D), Gov. Nikki Haley (R) and President Barack Obama. They all acted quickly and appropriately. One result was removal of the Confederate battle flag from a war memorial on the statehouse grounds.

Rodney Williams, one of five African Americans on the city council (to seven whites), is a native Charlestonian and a graduate of the College of Charleston. In the aftermath of the shootings, he says, “The outpouring of kindness that has been extended among Charlestonians has been extraordinary.” He adds, “We still have work to do,” citing more affordable housing, better employment opportunities and “bringing young people together so they see each other in a better light. . . . Black and white, we still have work to do.”

CHARLESTON'S BUSINESS ECONOMY

In addition to a city of history, there's another Charleston less known to tourists, but the envy of economic development agencies across the country. While noting the increase in Charleston's tourist business, Chad Walldorf, chairman of the State Board of Economic Advisors and longtime business leader in Charleston, says “the really remarkable growth is the growing industrial presence in the area, port activity, and a surge in hi-tech start-ups.”



Manufacturing concerns, which take advantage of Charleston's harbor, include Boeing, with a work-force of 8,200; the Robert Bosch Corporation, makers of brake and fuel injection systems, with 2,200 employees, Nucor Steel, with 1,500, and Detyen's Shipyard, a ship-building, repair and maintenance firm, with 800 workers.

Charleston is the nation's fourth busiest port, accounting for in excess of \$3 million of cargo every hour. It offers shipping directly to some 140 countries around the world. Container shipments grew by 14% in fiscal year 2015, according to South Carolina Ports, which includes the much smaller port of Georgetown as well as Charleston. In addition, Carnival Cruise Lines will either embark or disembark a total of 71 Carnival Fantasy cruises in 2015.

The city's economy is also heavily supported by Joint Base Charleston, formed in 2010 by combining the air force and naval operations in the area. Now under the command of the US Air Force, the facilities rank as the metro area's largest employer, with 22,000 employees.

SILICON HARBOR

The catch phrase to describe the newest entry into the diversification of Charleston's economy is Silicon Harbor. New hi-tech start-ups are now coming to Charleston and the region is now among the top ten fast-growing software development centers in the nation. The tech industry currently employs some 11,000 people in the area. And it's growing— at a rate 26% faster than the national average.



One impressive example is BiblioLabs, which is in the business of making it possible for librarians and others to gain access to the voluminous amount of public-domain material online, including, notes an article in Charlestonmag.com, the 60,000 volumes of the British Library's 19th Century collection. The firm, which has grown 1,111% in the past three years, ranks seventh on Inc.'s media company list, right behind Facebook, which is in sixth place.

To encourage hi-tech companies, in 2001 Charleston established the Charleston Digital Corridor. There is more to be done to encourage growth in Silicon Harbor, however. Some folks are encouraging the establishment more technology-related courses at local colleges to educate the kind of workforce these companies need. Another asset would be to build a fiber-optic network.

continued on page 20



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HISTORIC CHARLESTON

This latest entry into the Charleston business community is in some ways a link between Historic Charleston and industrial Charleston. Hi-tech firms often locate in Charleston, especially downtown, so their bright and cosmopolitan workforce can enjoy the benefits of tourist/historic Charleston.

Much of the old stereotype of Charleston is still very visible. Many late 18th and early 19th Century residences, churches and public buildings, left standing when the post-bellum Industrial Revolution skipped over Charleston make the city a charming tourist destination. There are even some historic cobblestone streets, but we wouldn't advise driving on them, unless you want to get new shock absorbers.

The tourist business took off in 2010 when *Conde Nast Traveler's* readers named Charleston the number one tourist destination in the nation— an honor that continues year after year. “The tourism economy went from good to great,” says Walldorf, who has lived in the city for 25 years. A new restaurant opens at least once a week and the city “has gained a deserved reputation for having world-class dining,” says Walldorf, who founded a chain of barbecue restaurants with two friends in 1992, then sold it to a private equity firm in 2006.

All told, some 4.51 million people visit Charleston annually, adding \$3.22 billion to the local economy.

A CULTURAL DESTINATION

The tourist “industry,” if you will, benefits from the many cultural venues in the city. The modern cultural upsurge began in 1977, when Italian composer Gian Carlo Menotti decided to found his Spoleto Festival in Charleston, bringing rising and established cultural figures to the city. Among the young unknown performers was cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Then in 1979, “When Tennessee Williams came, people started talking about it. It put in on the map,” says long-time arts reviewer Dottie Ashley, currently covering the arts scene for the *Charleston Mercury*. Spoleto, a 17-day series of performances

and art exhibits, now attracts between 70,000 and 80,000 people each year.

Charleston's Dock Street Theater, established in 1736, was the first in the nation built to serve as a theater. It was partially financed by King Charles II, who said, “Second only to women is the theatre.” The Dock Street Theatre burned, but was rebuilt in 1809. The Charleston Museum, established in 1773, was the first in the nation, and the Gibbes Art Gallery was among the first.

In the 1920s and '30s, Charleston experienced what is now known as the Charleston Renaissance, anchored locally by Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, the first woman whose work was shown at Charleston's venerable Gibbes Art

Gallery. The era was enhanced by the presence of nationally known artist Alfred Hutton, who spent winters in the city drawing and teaching art to local artists. This heritage is reflected in the large number of art galleries in the city, making it one of the East Coast's significant art markets.

“Clinging to the past is Charleston's greatest sin and its greatest strength,” says Ashley. Her husband Franklin Ashley, a professor Emeritus at the College of Charleston who teaches in the school's theater department, is descended from Lord Ashley Cooper, one of the eight Lords Proprietor who founded the colony of South Carolina. Noting that newcomers were once discouraged, she says that “Charleston is much more open today,” with 41 people moving here every day.

In sum, whether it is due to the military presence, the busy port, major manufacturing concerns or tourism, abetted by a strong cultural component, Charleston has been growing rapidly in the past decade or so. In the 2000 census, the city had 96,650 people; in 2015, the population is estimated at 133,579.

There has also been a shift in the racial makeup of the city. In 2010, Charleston was 63% white, 34% black. In 2010, it was 69% white, 26% black. This shift was the result of many African Americans moving to suburban neighborhoods, while whites, especially young people, are moving downtown, a trend characteristic of many American cities.

Politically, Charleston County is very competitive. President Obama carried it 50% to 48% for Mitt Romney in 2012. And in the 2014 governor's race, Democratic challenger Vincent Sheheen led incumbent Gov. Nikki Haley by 49% to 48%.

So whether you want to visit a city replete with tourist destinations, enjoy the Spoleto Festival, buy art, eat well, get a good job in manufacturing or shipping, or establish an as-yet-unthought-of hi-tech start-up, Charleston, the old and the new, may be just the place for you.

Hastings Wyman is founding editor of the Southern Political Report.



When **AshleyMadison.com** was hacked and had the email addresses of tens of thousands of members released, there obviously was going to be embarrassing fallout. Already thousands of federal workers, political consultants, and even elected officials (including prominent Southerners) have been among those philanthropists unlucky enough to see their names leaked onto the internet. More promise to follow as the hackers release more information.



The coal industry is in deep trouble courtesy of the Obama administration's stringent emission regulations. And the decision by the Atlanta-based Southern Company, which has invested heavily in coal in the past, to buy a big natural gas company makes the coal outlook even bleaker. Mines are closing and jobs are disappearing by the thousands in major coal-producing states like West Virginia and Kentucky. (West Virginia has the highest unemployment rate in the nation due to this trend.)



Coal's woes are somewhat offset by the technology taking place in **energy production**. Utilities such as the Southern Company see the expansion of its portfolio into the lucrative and growing natural gas sector as a move that could lead to more profitability and cheaper energy prices. Other big utilities in the South such as SCANA and Duke Energy are also marketing both electricity and gas.

Republican politicians' weird obsession with reality TV started a couple years ago as Louisiana candidates courted the wildly popular Robertson family behind the smash hit *Duck Dynasty*. As that star faded, the spotlight turned to Arkansas' own Duggar family, whose TLC show "19 Kids and Counting" got big ratings before its cancellation following the revelation that one of the Duggar sons had sexually molested several children as a teen. The Duggar family has political ties—patriarch Jim Bob served in the Arkansas House of Representatives and even had a failed U.S. Senate run. Son Josh, (the aforementioned molester) has been active in the presidential circuit. Politicians were quick to distance themselves following the vile allegations and subsequent cancellation— all except fellow Arkansan and former Gov. Mike Huckabee. He still supports the Duggar son even as he dealt with his teenage past and the newer story that his name was found on adultery "dating" site AshleyMadison.com.



While Democrats are focused on the possibility of more challengers entering the presidential race as Hillary Clinton slips in the polls, one Southern name keeps coming up as a potential Democratic V.P. candidate— former San Antonio Mayor and current Obama cabinet member **Julián Castro**. Long considered a rising star in the Democratic Party, don't be surprised to hear his name brought up more and more as a young, Latino, Southern candidate who checks all the boxes the political Left is looking for in a running mate.



THE

South's Clout

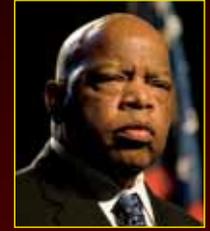
IN CONGRESS



BY PHIL KENT



SEN. CRUZ



REP. LEWIS

if a researcher were to write about Southern congressional clout 40 years ago, Mississippi's two Democrat U.S. senators James Eastland and John Stennis would be topping the list due to their roles as entrenched, powerful committee chairmen. With Republicans now controlling the U.S. Senate and House, another Mississippian— Sen. Thad Cochran—sits in Eastland's chair presiding over the powerful Appropriations Committee. But it is Alabama-born Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, representing the border state of Kentucky, who is the pre-eminent Southerner in Congress.

Indeed, Republicans in the 11 states of the old Confederacy are almost as dominant in Congress as Southern Democrats were 40 years ago.

THE HOUSE REPUBLICANS

On the House side, Southerners unquestionably form the heart of the GOP caucus. The former Confederate states send 101 GOP House members to Capitol Hill; there are just 37 Democrats. The South has one member in top leadership— Rep. Steve Scalise, R-La. Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers hails from McConnell's Kentucky and Rep. Tom Price, R-Ga., heads the influential Budget Committee. Price and Rogers are among nine Southern committee chairs, including six from Texas.

Price may be the most powerful Southern lawmaker due in large measure to his effective media messaging, especially on cable television news shows. He has added clout as a past chairman of the GOP Study Committee and the Republican Policy Committee. The Georgian, a former orthopedic doctor, is known primarily for sponsoring the "Empowering Patients First Act," which he has introduced in the past three congressional sessions. Originally intended to be an alternative to Democratic efforts to reform the health care system, it has since been touted by Price and other Republican leaders as a potential replacement to the Obamacare law. His bill, among other things, creates and expands tax credits for purchasing health insurance, allows for

some interstate health insurance markets, and reforms medical malpractice lawsuits.

THE SENATE REPUBLICANS

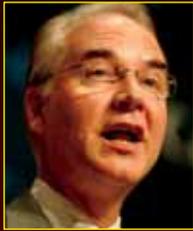
The region's Senate Republicans are essentially conservative, but range from those who are more ideologically "hard-line" to more centrist lawmakers known for deal-making with Democrats on certain policy issues. Perhaps a frame of reference would be deal-maker Cochran on one end and staunch conservative Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama on the other.

Cochran, now in his seventh term succeeding Eastland, essentially controls the Senate's purse strings and targets a lot of federal money into what is still the poorest state in the nation. He told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* earlier this year. "I think we've earned a reputation for friendly persuasion and other characteristics of the Deep South that people find attractive," Cochran says of his fellow Southern senators. "We also have some of the poorest people who live in our country are in the Mississippi Delta, and we've made great strides I think in bringing programs like Head Start and other education areas of emphasis to our state."

Asked about those conservatives who often object to big federal spending on projects (he was nearly topped in a GOP primary last year by one of those Tea Party-backed objectors), Cochran says:

"We have to respect the views of the majority, but the good thing about the Senate is most everybody who serves in the Senate— representing an entire state— they have the broader base of interests and understand the importance of getting along and cooperating with each other. I think there is less concentration of just pet projects or activities. It's much broader and bigger than that."

Senate GOP leader McConnell, elected in 1984 and a masterful strategist who has been both a minority and majority leader of his caucus, is the most influential Southern Republican. Interestingly, he has a background in the area of civil rights that sometimes collides



REP. PRICE



SEN. COCHRAN



SEN. McCONNELL



SEN. PAUL



REP. SCALISE



SEN. ISAKSON

with many members of his caucus who basically believe there has been enough “civil rights” legislation passed during President Barack Obama’s administration that infringe on state powers. Also, McConnell surprised his caucus by voting earlier this year for the confirmation of liberal Loretta Lynch as Obama’s attorney general. *New York Times* reporter Jennifer Steinhauer wrote an interesting account of his odd vote:

“After he voted in favor of her confirmation, he looked on with glee as several African-American women from the House came over to celebrate. ‘I did kid my friend Sheila Jackson Lee,’ he said of the outspoken lawmaker from Texas, who like many Democrats was angry that it took so long to get the confirmation vote. ‘I said, ‘I don’t remember you coming over and giving (Democrat Senate leader) Dick Durbin trouble when he voted against (confirmation of back Secretary of State) Condoleezza Rice.’”

Steinhauer probed the origins of his civil rights commitment after his Alabama move to Kentucky where the youngster was brought up by parents who opposed the legal segregation of the day. “It was fermented on the campus of the University of Louisville,” she wrote, “where he encouraged students to march with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. It was reinforced by his internship in the office of Senator John Sherman Cooper, a Kentucky Republican who helped break the Democrat Southern-led filibuster of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.” He even attended the “I Have a Dream” King speech in Washington while working in Cooper’s office. In fact, McConnell once told this writer that his revered “mentor” was Cooper, who died in 1991.

Civil rights groups are pressing McConnell to support legislation ending “racial profiling” practices by law enforcement (which he is not inclined to do) and a bill to restore a provision stripped away by a 2013 Supreme Court ruling that would restore federal approval of any voting/election law changes in Southern states. He’s not sympathetic to that either, noting that “America is very different from what it was in the 1960s.”

THREE SPECIAL LEADERS

Southern Democrats don’t have as much clout these days since their party doesn’t control either congressional chamber. (The last white Democrat congressman from the Deep South— John Barrow of Georgia— was defeated at the polls last November.) But there are of course noteworthy exceptions within their House and Senate

caucuses— and at least two members deserve mention.

In the Senate, a powerful and respected voice is Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va. First elected in November 2008 and narrowly re-elected to a second term last November, the former Virginia governor serves on the Senate Finance, Banking, Budget, and Intelligence committees. During his tenure, Warner has garnered a reputation as a lawmaker who works with both Republicans and Democrats to cut red tape, increase government performance and accountability and promote private sector innovation and job creation. Warner also is recognized as a moderate advocate within a liberal caucus who pushes national defense and veterans issues, and he has been a voice urging fellow Democrats to work with Republicans to address the debt and deficit.

A revered black congressman from Georgia, Rep. John Lewis, is sometimes described as the “conscience” of House liberals, especially on civil rights/voting rights issues. Lewis is the only living “Big Six” leader of the 1960s civil rights movement, having been the head of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee— a group that played a key role in ending legal segregation laws in the South.

Lewis has served in the Democratic House whip organization since shortly after his first election to Congress. His only political scare was in 1986, when he came in second in a Democrat primary to the late civil rights leader Julian Bond. But he came back to win a bitter runoff. (He accused Bond of being part of Atlanta’s drug scene and inferred that he was “lazy.”) But all that is ancient history and the two patched up differences in later years.

Special mention should be made of Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., often acknowledged by members of both parties as a respected, gracious lawmaker who does his homework and is a go-to colleague to craft bipartisan legislation. The Georgia lawmaker, now serving his second term and running for re-election next year, has the distinction of being the only senator named to chair two committees: the ethics and veterans’ affairs panels (where he is pushing for much-needed reform of veterans’ care).

Phil Kent is publisher and editor of Southern Political Report and a former editor of The Augusta, Georgia, Chronicle.

AnyTrax Empowers Criminal Justice Reform

by Gary Reese

Criminal justice reform was a first-term focus of Gov. Nathan Deal. Under his leadership, and that of the Criminal Justice Reform Council and Department of Community Supervision Commissioner Michael Nail, Georgia has made significant progress. By utilizing technology in the Pardons and Paroles organization, the state has saved millions of dollars and aided the monitoring process for thousands of offenders to successfully complete their parole requirements. In a world where everyone is asked to tighten the purse-strings, the efforts by Georgia exemplifies the principles of “doing more with less.”

A key component to Georgia’s success is the use of AnyTrax monitoring services. AnyTrax is a Georgia corporation that has honed its services and technology over the last 10 years to address the challenges faced by criminal justice agencies. It had been supplying technology to many levels of probation and parole agencies across America but found little success in Georgia. But while serving as the executive director of Pardons and Paroles, Nail had the foresight to recognize that technology could immediately address the financial challenges his department faced while leveraging technology to free-up officers to focus on offenders who could most benefit from their supervision, and improve their ability to reintegrate into society.

The first service Georgia Pardons and Paroles used was Self-Report. The Self-Report service offered by AnyTrax uses a patented voice recognition system to identify the person calling to check-in. Once verified, the offender is asked a series of questions, the same questions that a parole officer would ask, and the answers are recorded for play-back and historical data. If an offender for some reason gives a negative response during this check-in, the Self-Report system automatically sends an e-mail or text to the officer that owns that particular case-file to keep the officer updated with his parolee. This system was an instant hit with officers who needed more time for face-to-face contact with the higher risk offenders.

Based upon the success of the Self-Report experience, Georgia Pardons and Paroles added AnyTrax Curfew services to validate that home confinement requirements were being met. Offenders are called multiple times during the

confinement timeframe to validate they are within the confinement perimeter. The Curfew implementation also proved to benefit officers and offenders. Nail’s faith in his vision and his team’s successful buy-in to that vision transformed the agency.

After years of success with Self-Report and Curfew monitoring, Georgia was once again asked to reduce the cost of monitoring offenders. Nail again called upon AnyTrax to help supply a solution to the budget problem. Through a close working partnership, AnyTrax and Georgia Pardons and Paroles developed a monitoring solution that provides electronic monitoring of high-risk offenders.

Pardons and Paroles was spending a large portion of its available budget on ankle bracelets to monitor individuals that had committed crimes judges felt warranted “around the clock” monitoring. This form of monitoring is costly both in terms of dollars and manpower to administer the system. AnyTrax and the Paroles team worked together and designed

a product that gave the officers the connect-ability of the cell-phones and turned the offender’s *own* phone into a tracking device. All of this is accomplished at a significant cost savings.

AnyTrax’s electronic monitoring solution utilizes a patented voice-recognition system to ensure officers that the offender is with his or her phone via a random “check-in.” The intensity of the system can be varied according to the offender there-by implementing the Evidence Based Practice of step-down supervision. If an offender behaves, he or she can receive fewer interruptions into their daily routine allowing them to move back into society without the stigma of an ankle bracelet. Once again the partnership paid off for Georgia, the offenders and AnyTrax.

And Georgia isn’t finished! In his role as commissioner of the newly-formed statewide Department of Community Supervision, Nail is expanding his positive impact on the criminal justice system. Look for even more successes as Georgia continues to lead the nation in criminal reform.

Gary Reese is a staff writer for Southern Political Report magazine.

AnyTrax’s
electronic monitoring
solution utilizes a patented
voice-recognition system



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-Executive Director, State Board of Pardons and Paroles

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Raleigh

THE SOUTH'S NEW HOT SPOT

by Jerry Woodruff



What do actress Evan Rachel Wood, President Andrew Johnson, and American Idol runner-up Clay Aiken have in common? They were all born and raised in Raleigh, North Carolina.

This once sleepy Southern town— with a population of just 100,00 in 1960 and known as “The City of Oaks” for its quiet, tree-lined streets— is one of the fastest growing cities in the U.S. according to *Forbes* magazine. Its population now contributes nearly 500,000 people to the 2 million-plus who live in the “Triangle” area of Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill.

Named after English poet and adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh, founder of the lost Roanoke Colony in present-day Dare County, and who famously (or infamously depending on your point of view!) introduced tobacco to Europe, it is North Carolina’s capital city and covers 142.8 square miles.

Ranked by *Forbes* as America’s second-best spot to live for young adults, the city is 52 percent female and 48 percent male, with a median age of 31.9. *Forbes* based its ranking on annual job growth, federal unemployment data, gross metropolitan product growth, and median annual pay for college graduates. Forty-two percent of the population have college degrees, and the median salary is \$51,500. *Forbes* said Raleigh “has one of the best job growth projections of any city we assessed and the 16th best average salary for young professionals, exceeded only by markedly more expensive cities.” Raleigh’s cost-of-living is

indexed at 104.4 compared to a U.S. average of 100. The median home value is estimated at \$198,000.

But economics alone are not the only reason Raleigh is a haven for young professionals. The city is rapidly earning a reputation for its entertainment and cultural attractions that have plenty of appeal to new adults with discretionary income.

The city’s once Southern distinction is giving way to a cosmopolitan sensibility as an array of new bars and restaurants opening every year draw crowds downtown every weekend where diners and party-goers can find cuisine from all over the world, including Vietnamese, Mexican, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Italian, Greek, German, Cajun and an occasional traditional southern barbecue.

A major contributor to Raleigh’s bustling nightlife is a rich variety of music venues where partiers take in the best of local as well as traveling national bands. Each year since 2010, Raleigh plays host to the annual Hopscotch Music Festival, a 3-day extravaganza during which local, national, and international bands in a variety of genres from rock, hip-hop, metal, dance, punk, alt-country, folk, bluegrass and more, all play for crowds in many different clubs throughout the city, including downtown streets that are temporarily blocked to traffic to accommodate the bands and their fans. Last year was the fifth Hopscotch Music Festival held in early September. More than 140 bands performed in 12 different clubs and on the main outdoor stage downtown.

Two other major music and event venues in Raleigh include Walnut Creek Amphitheatre and the PNC Arena that have attracted national and international artists including the Rolling Stones.

Museums in Raleigh include the North Carolina Museum of Art in West Raleigh, as well as the North Carolina Museum of History and North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences located next to each other near the State Capitol in Downtown Raleigh.

Several major universities and colleges call Raleigh home, including North Carolina State University, the largest public university in the state, and Shaw University, the first historically black university in the American South.

Besides offering 139 parks with 9,846 acres, 104 miles of greenway trails, 9 public swimming pools, and 112 tennis courts, the city is home to the first-rate North Carolina Symphony orchestra, The Carolina Ballet, and the North Carolina Opera Company. The symphony orchestra performs 175 times a year in different venues around the state, but its home is Raleigh's state-of-the-art, acoustically spectacular Meymandi Concert Hall with a 65-foot ceiling and seating for 1,700. The orchestra is so well regarded, it has attracted world-class solo artists to perform with the symphony, including Yo-Yo Ma, Izthak Perlman, Lang Lang, Joshua Bell, and many others. The ballet company was founded in 1997 to meet the demands of the increasingly sophisticated tastes of the city's growing population. Since then, the Carolina Ballet has garnered critical praise from both national and international media, has staged 80 world premiere ballets, and has toured internationally in China and Hungary. The North Carolina Opera Company boasts a wide repertoire from Handel, Mozart and Puccini to Wagner, Dvorak and Philip Glass, and performs in Raleigh's Memorial Auditorium and Fletcher Opera Theater, both housed with Meymandi Concert Hall inside the architecturally imposing Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Raleigh.

As the city's amenities have increased, so has interest in tourism and conventions. In 2008, the new \$225 million Raleigh Convention Center opened. The three-level, 500,000 square-foot building contains a 150,000 square foot exhibit hall, 20 meeting rooms, and a 32,000 square-foot ballroom. The ballroom on the highest level can seat up to 2,715 persons banquet-style, or 3,630 persons theater-style. The exhibit hall on the lowest level can hold up to 790 booths or seat up to 6,800 persons banquet-style or 9,600 persons theater-style. Extensive acoustics work was performed to not only provide sound isolation between adjacent activities within the center, but also to control noise output to the surrounding community.

To most observers, Raleigh will continue to be an important center for growth and economic opportunity in the foreseeable future. The Downtown Raleigh Alliance, an association of local independent business owners, says that during the first quarter of 2015 alone, already nine new street-level businesses opened to the public for the first time. According to a projection from a new United Nations study of world population growth, Raleigh will grow faster than any other large city in the U.S. over the next fifteen years, expecting to grow 71 percent from now through 2030.

If economic opportunity is in your game plan, look to Raleigh.

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Jerry Woodruff is a freelance writer and editor based in Raleigh.





Capitol
Advocates_{PC}



Jason Webb, Managing Member
Twitter: @CapitolAdvocate

"You must educate before you can advocate."

Capitol Advocates, LLC

Full Service Government Relations, Lobbying,
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www.cawv.com • info@cawv.com

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Meet West Virginia's **JASON WEBB**

There's an old saying around state legislatures that "if you aren't at the table, then you could end up on the menu." Jason Webb and his firm, Capitol Advocates, understand the importance of having representation engaged throughout the entire process. He knows that it may come down to that last conversation or that final piece of information which enabled his clients to succeed.

Webb's often heard motto is "You must educate before you can advocate." He believes that policy makers are invariably dependent on concise and accurate information. While the introduction of those conversations is the foundation for advocacy, it's the ongoing discussion and exchange of ideas that tend to build success in the long run.

"If you can reduce complicated matters down to their core principles, then individuals will usually have a better chance of understanding them. Greater comprehension brings with it the likelihood that people will consider different perspectives on an issue. By increasing diverse viewpoints, we can collectively solve complex problems," he says.

Capitol Advocates is a full service government relations, lobbying, advocacy and consulting firm in West Virginia. "We genuinely believe in the traditional values of hard work and integrity. We advocate our clients' positions to government leaders, not rationalize their viewpoints to our clients. We consciously adhere to this philosophy every day," Webb says.

"We understand that effective government relations require both determination and persistence," he continues. "Our knowledge, experience and professional relationships are leveraged to assist in these endeavors. While it is sometimes difficult to guarantee outcomes, you can be assured of the effort."

So meet Jason Webb.

For nearly two decades, Webb has worked in government relations, serving a diverse range of clients that include Fortune 500 companies, trade associations and non-profit corporations. His proficiency includes economic development, environment, finance, healthcare, insurance, natural resources, professional licensure, taxes and technology.

The son of a coal miner, Webb understands the adage that there is no substitute for hard work. He worked his way through college including internships at Merrill Lynch and a trading firm on the Chicago Board Options Exchange as well as working with the Senior PGA Tour. Webb received a B.B.A. in Finance and Political Science from the University of Kentucky.

Webb's Capitol Advocates would welcome the opportunity to assist your organization with the following services:

- **RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS**
- **LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATION & MONITORING**
- **ADMINISTRATIVE INTERACTION**
- **REGULATORY PROCESS & RULE-MAKING REVIEW**
- **ISSUE ADVOCACY & SUPPORT**
- **GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES**
- **BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES**
- **SITE SELECTION SERVICES**

We genuinely believe in the traditional values of hard work and integrity. We advocate our clients' positions to government leaders, not rationalize their viewpoints to our clients.

CHATTANOOGA

River City Revitalization by Baker Owens

Chattanooga, the city once known as “where cotton meets corn,” has had many lives for an American city.

What was once a small trading post that became an industrial town has given way to a tourist and technology-laden metropolis. Many may pass Chattanooga on I-75 between Atlanta and Nashville without realizing all the possibilities in taking that turn east onto Interstate 24.



The area now known as Chattanooga has likely had human inhabitants since before the Ice Age. Situated on the Tennessee River, Chattanooga was long known as a trading center. Convenient for river travel, flatboats and other trading vessels traveled up and down the Tennessee River loaded with corn, wheat, potatoes, whiskey, coal and King Cotton. When the railroad came in 1850, the city boomed. A gateway between the mountain towns of Appalachia to the North and the cotton regions of the South, Chattanooga was a vital location during the Civil War and the Confederates loss during the Chattanooga Campaign left Chattanooga as the supply and logistics base for General Sherman's campaign in Georgia and the March to the Sea that effectively ended the war.

Chattanooga remained a manufacturing and industrial hub during Reconstruction and Chattanooga experienced another big growth period during World War I and II due to its nearby neighbor, the then home for the 6th Cavalry, Fort Oglethorpe. Part of the industry that grew here was steel, as well as munitions, iron and manufacturing. In 1940, 1 in 3 Chattanoogaans were employed in a manufacturing capacity but the changes to the American economy in the 1970s and 80s, plummeting manufacturing and deindustrialization, dropped this to 1 in 5. In fact, the population of Chattanooga dropped 10% in the 1980s.

Community leaders and officials realized major changes need to be made to ensure a good future for Chattanooga. The city partnered with the American Institute of Architects, the Urban Land Institute, area non-profits and citizens, to work on long-range plans.

One of the first pieces to Chattanooga's redevelopment puzzle was the Tennessee Aquarium. Built downtown on the river on the site of abandoned warehouses, the aquarium was at the time the largest freshwater aquarium in the world. In its first year of 1992, the aquarium drew more than a million visitors, 50% more than forecasters had predicted, and it has remained the anchor for Chattanooga's tourism and growth since.

In 1993, the city reopened the historic Walnut Street Bridge. Built in 1890, the 2,376 foot bridge was the first to connect downtown with the “North Shore” on the other side. The bridge had been closed to motor vehicles in 1978 as it was obsolete and quickly fell further into disrepair. When the city reopened it, it became a pedestrian-only bridge and allowed for foot traffic between the rapidly developing commercial area on the North

Shore and the increasing park space centered around the aquarium.

By 1999, Coolidge Park was opened on the North Shore and now downtown has park space on both sides, a world-class aquarium and the Bluff View Art District, home to the Hunter Museum (featuring a Monet exhibit this year) and several cafes, galleries and a quaint inn for guests. The Lookouts, Chattanooga's minor league baseball team, plays at AT&T Field overlooking the river. There's no shortage of ice cream shops for the summertime sweet tooth and Ruby Falls and Rock City, known by many through the over 900 iconic barn roofs and sides paintings done by Clark Byers across 19 states between 1935 and 1969, are still tourist magnets.

In 2011, Volkswagen opened a \$1 billion plant in Chattanooga that serves as its North American manufacturing headquarters. Other businesses include long-time Chattanooga stalwarts Chatterm (maker of Allegra, IcyHot and Gold Bond), Coca-Cola bottling, McKee Foods (maker of Little Debbie snack cakes), and Fortune 500 insurer Unum. It is home to what may be the country's fastest internet, thanks to a project by the Electric Power Board.

Chattanooga is within an hour's drive to some of the nation's best rock climbing, hang gliding, mountain biking, caving and white water rafting (home to the site of the whitewater portion of the Atlanta Olympics). This array of outdoor activity possibilities has led to it being named as *Outside* magazine's “best town ever” in 2011 and again in 2015. The redevelopment of the riverfront area lured the Head of the Hooch, the country's second largest regatta, to relocate to Chattanooga. The Riverbend Music Festival in June draws over 700,000 attendees. Over 3 million tourists visit Chattanooga each year and tourism spending has reached \$1 billion.

Between tourism, new technology and a more attractive downtown for residents to enjoy, Chattanooga is well-positioned to continue its growth and popularity.

Baker Owens of Atlanta is a staff writer for Southern Political Report magazine

A GEORGIA CENTER TRAINS HUNDREDS OF RAILROADERS ANNUALLY

by Jennifer Hazelton

Kimberlyn Palmer was facing a fork in the road.

The single mother from Atlanta lost her old job as a welder due to layoffs. While she loves welding, Kimberlyn wanted an opportunity to join a company where she could learn new skills, grow a career, advance up the ladder, and provide for her family. Her wish list brought Kimberlyn to Norfolk Southern Railroad. A trainee since April, Kimberlyn is studying to be a carman at the railroad. Carmen basically train mechanics, who maintain the wheels, brake shoes, and coupling units.

Sean Goward of Dover, Delaware, found Norfolk Southern after the conclusion of a more than decade-long career in the US Air Force. While in the military, he fixed F-15 fighters and worked as a flight engineer on C-5 cargo planes. Sean is now training to be a signal maintenance engineer, which monitors and maintains the equipment at rail crossings. Both Sean and Kimberlyn are students at Norfolk Southern's technical training center in McDonough, Georgia. Both are embarking on new careers that could last the breadth of their remaining professional lives, as it is common for employees at Norfolk Southern to stay with the company 30 years or more.

The only training center of its kind for Norfolk Southern in the country, the center has been in operation since 1975. Trainees visit the center for up to nine weeks, learning jobs like conductor, engineer, electrician, machinist and operations management. According to Dominik Browne, the manager of the training center, the Georgia facility trains an average of 2,500 future railroaders a year. Browne says adding more railroaders to the company roster is imperative, given the growth in freight rail. "The last couple of years with the energy boom in North Dakota, the crude oil segment is pretty new for us. It's supplementing the decline in transporting coal. We've had to hire quite a bit to accommodate that increase in traffic."

Norfolk Southern and its new trainees are facing immediate challenges. There are signs that the freight rail industry is slowing down. The Association of American Railways reported this month that rail traffic fell by 1.8% in July compared to a year ago, due to a steep decline oil and coal shipments. And all of the nation's railroads are feeling the pressure to comply with a deadline this year to install safety technology that can prevent many crashes, including derailments due to excessive speed like the Amtrak accident in Philadelphia in May, which killed eight people and left about 200 others injured.

Congress passed a rail safety law in 2008, giving railroads seven years to install Positive Train Control (PTC). According to a government report released this summer, only a handful of railroads are close to meeting the government's December 31st deadline to implement PTC. Norfolk Southern isn't one of them. None of the railroad's 3,400 locomotives are equipped with the technology yet because it is expensive and difficult to implement. Many railroads have been urging Congress to delay the deadline to give them more time.

The National Transportation Safety Board has been urging railroads to implement PTC or previous train control technologies for decades. The board contends that over time, it has investigated 145 accidents that could have been prevented with PTC, resulting in the deaths of more than 300 people.

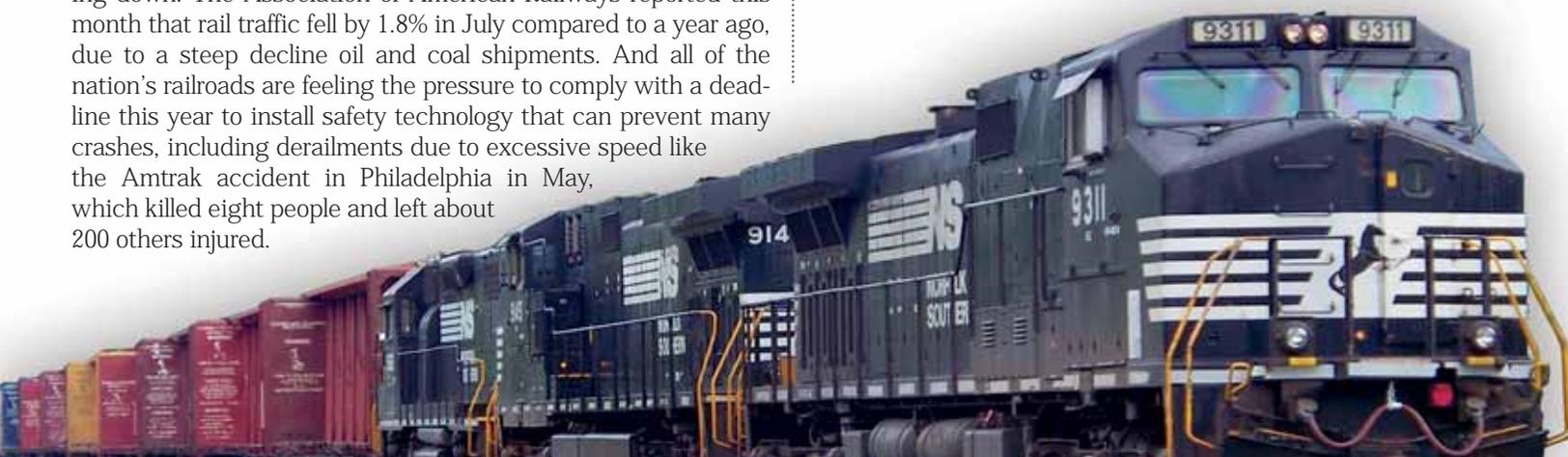
However, the negotiations with Washington on improving railroad safety are out of the hands of the trainees and instructors at the Norfolk Southern Training Center. Instead, Browne says the goal of the center is to train "safe and effective railroaders, who can execute all of their tasks safely and efficiently."

For Sean Goward and Kimberlyn Palmer, the training continues—not only to make them into safe railroaders, but also to open a gateway to a better, more prosperous future. While Sean has aspirations of becoming an instructor to future trainees, Kimberlyn sees her role at Norfolk Southern as an opportunity for career advancement. She's determined that her role as carman won't be the end of the line for her at Norfolk Southern. "My ideal goal is to be successful, and I'd love to move up in the company, maybe go up into management or in different positions like conductor or engineer as my son gets older. I want several titles behind my name."

Jennifer Hazelton is an Atlanta-based freelance writer who has worked at both CNN and Fox News Channel.



"Train training" and safety is the mission at Norfolk Southern's Georgia facility





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