



Carmage Walls
Commentary Prize

2018 Entry Form

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What is the subject/title of the entry? The \$9 billion failure of two nuclear reactors under construction in South Carolina and the fallout for electric ratepayers in the state.

Date(s) of publication? July 30, 2017 (Better protections for ratepayers), August 4, 2017 (Clean up nuclear disaster), March 7, 2018 (The opposite of prudent), March 23, 2018 (Make shareholders share cost), April 1, 2018 (Go ahead and slash SCANA rates), April 26, 2018 (Compromise on rate cut)

Is your newspaper under 50,000 circulation or above 50,000 circulation? Above 50,000

Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.) Ed Buckley started writing editorials raising the alarm about two nuclear reactors under construction in Fairfield, S.C. in 2015. Since then, the project increasingly ran behind schedule and over budget before it was finally abandoned last summer.

Now, millions of South Carolina residents face the prospect of paying off the \$9 billion project over the next six decades unless legislators, state regulators, courts and law enforcement officials are able to act on their behalf.

With less than two weeks left in this year's legislative session, it's unclear what -- if anything -- will be done by the state Legislature this year to provide electric customer relief. But so far, regulatory and legislative efforts are underway to right the situation and several legal investigations have been initiated.

The nuclear debacle is likely to remain a contentious issue throughout the summer and into the 2018 House and gubernatorial elections.

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Editorials



A crane used at the failed V.C. Summer Nuclear Station project was sold at auction for a fraction of its cost.

FILE/STAFF

Compromise on rate cut

Of course SCE&G electric customers should have their rates cut to save them from continuing to pay 18 percent of their monthly bills toward two nuclear reactors that will never be completed.

It's understandable that Gov. Henry McMaster has threatened to veto legislation that doesn't cut the full 18 percent related to the abandoned reactors. It's not surprising that the state House voted Wednesday to reject a Senate plan that would have cut just 13 percent of customers' bills.

"By allowing SCANA to continue to collect money from hardworking SCE&G ratepayers for a failed and fraudulent nuclear project, the Senate is sending a clear message that it prioritizes big business over South Carolina families," House Speaker Jay Lucas said in a statement after the vote.

"It defies logic, it defies common sense and it defies good faith to require the people of South Carolina to pay for something that they're not going to get — particularly after they've been paying for it for years," Gov. McMaster said.

There is truth to both statements. But Mr. McMaster, Mr. Lucas and state representatives would do well to consider that a 13 percent rate cut is much better than no rate cut at all. And Wednesday's House vote raises that troubling possibility.

Besides, the Senate number isn't arbitrary. It's based on a study that showed that the Legislature could temporarily cut as much as 13 percent of SCE&G customers' bills without risking the financial health of its parent

company, SCANA.

And as righteous as it might feel to slash rates by as much as possible, it's a risky proposition. South Carolina residents and businesses depend on reliable electric power. Bankrupting SCANA could throw the state's economy into chaos and lead to higher rates for customers in the long run.

That doesn't mean ratepayers don't merit a full rate cut eventually — and possibly additional measures to refund the money they have already paid toward the failed reactors.

But it would be more sensible to leave that to state regulators, law enforcement and the courts, all of which are investigating the matter. They will have the final say on the prudence and legality of the reactor project and the way it was managed. Any rate cut imposed by legislation would almost certainly be only temporary.

The rate cut question will now go to a conference committee, in which three representatives and three senators will attempt to hash out their differences and come to an agreement. There are seven days left in the legislative session. Time is of the essence.

Indeed, customers have already paid 18 percent of their bills toward the failed project every month for nine months since the reactors were abandoned last summer. A rate cut is desperately needed before the next bills are sent out.

The state Legislature has accomplished little concrete reform this year with regards to one of South Carolina's largest-ever economic disasters. It would be another disaster if the legislative session were to end without a compromise that cuts customer bills without unduly risking the state economy.

Immigration legislation needed

The Trump administration suffered another setback to its efforts to enforce immigration law on Tuesday when a federal judge blocked a pending order that would end protections from deportation for individuals brought to this country illegally as children. The judge also ordered the administration to process new applications for the program known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

President Trump last year gave notice that he was giving Congress time to enact legislation properly redefining the legal status of the "Dreamers" before ending protections for them.

However, Congress has failed to act. And there is no indication that a plan is likely to pass in the near future.

On Tuesday, the judge gave the Department of Homeland Security 90 days to explain the legal and constitutional basis of Mr. Trump's order to suspend the DACA program.

Assuming that DHS can successfully defend the decision to cancel an Obama-era order widely viewed as usurping the role of Congress in setting immigration policy, the judge's order may be only a temporary setback for Mr. Trump.

But there are other setbacks as well. Last week a federal appeals court said the Justice Department could not deny federal funds to Chicago despite that city's refusal to cooperate fully with federal immigration agents.

The court rightly said only Congress had the power to impose such punitive action. It let stand a national injunction against the

Justice Department effort to withhold federal grants to cities and jurisdictions that don't comply with immigration enforcement.

The Chicago case highlights the frustration the administration faces in trying to enforce immigration law in so-called "sanctuary cities," and states like California, that have passed ordinances designed to shelter illegal immigrants.

The failure of Congress to enact a new immigration law that would fix a broad array of immigration problems, including the critical question of enforcement of immigration law, has been a disgrace for years. And as the two recent court rulings show, legislative fixes are only becoming more urgent.

Meanwhile, the immigration enforcement battle is being fought on other fronts.

Federal courts have upheld a Texas law prohibiting sanctuaries for illegal immigrants. The South Carolina Senate, with the backing of Gov. Henry McMaster, wants the state to certify that South Carolina cities are enforcing federal immigration law. Two southern California counties, Orange and San Diego, have joined a federal lawsuit against a California law that limits state and local authority cooperation with federal immigration enforcement activities.

All of these are thorny issues that affect the lives of millions of people.

But the larger concern must be effectively securing our national borders and resolving the status of millions of illegal residents. And only Congress can do this. The longer it irresponsibly dawdles, the more complex this already divisive challenge will become.

SHENEMAN



Letters to the Editor

Security hub

Recently, the first two of 12 Air Force F-35 Joint Strike Fighters arrived in Okinawa, Japan. It's exciting to realize that South Carolina, specifically the Lowcountry, is playing an important role with the F-35.

As these next-generation stealth aircraft bring new capabilities to allied forces, the Lowcountry has become a hub for international pilot training.

Seventy-five American, British and Italian F-35 pilots have been trained at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. One of those graduates has been deployed to fly an F-35 in Japan. This training facility offers state-of-the-art full mission simulators to provide a realistic training environment and prepare pilots to be mission-ready.

The Lowcountry also is home to a training squadron of F-35B pilots known as the "Warlords," and the Marine Corps plans to add a second training squadron and two operational squadrons. There are about 30 F-35B aircraft deployed to Beaufort today, and the number is projected to rise to 70. As the F-35 program grows, we are seeing economic benefits including \$30 million in direct and indirect economic impact, supporting 350 jobs.

The F-35 is essential to maintaining the security of the United States and our allies. As a retired Air Force captain, a retired state treasurer, and as someone dedicated to economic development and job creation in South Carolina, I am proud our state and region are playing a tremendous role with these game-changing military aircraft and the brave pilots who fly them.

CONVERSE CHELLIS III
Parkwood Drive
Summerville

Propaganda

I read the article about Planned Parenthood's recent procurement of property in West Ashley. No amount of fresh paint is going to change what they do there. They were delirious with joy about how they are able to infiltrate more of South Carolina with their propaganda supporting family health issues such as abortions and vasectomies.

Why do you fight so hard and vehemently to save trees, whales, seals and other animals, but you won't fight to save babies?

LUE CHEVERIE
Hopeman Lane
Mount Pleasant

Energy policy

After the past year's nuclear plant fiasco and last month's rejection of a solar energy bill, one might wonder about South Carolina's long-term energy strategy. At the national level, energy policy has become a hyper-partisan issue, with Democrats predicting doom and gloom if we don't wean ourselves from fossil fuels while the Republicans want to make coal great again.

A nonpartisan initiative called the "Risky Business Project" provides convincing evidence that American busi-

nesses face large and unacceptable risks from climate change.

Mitigating those risks will require a large-scale shift away from fossil fuels and toward up-front capital investments in clean energy technologies. The private sector is very capable of achieving this dramatic shift. What's missing is a clear and consistent public policy and regulatory framework.

While the current administration has chosen to ignore the consensus on climate science, there will be an inevitable, belated political realignment. Unfortunately, U.S. industry is at a significant disadvantage in not having a time frame for transitioning to a low-carbon energy future.

The tide is beginning to turn. Groups like the Climate Solutions Caucus, which now has 72 members in the House of Representatives (36 Republicans and 36 Democrats), are driving toward depoliticizing the issue of climate change.

The Citizens Climate Lobby is advocating for putting a price on carbon emissions that starts at \$35 per ton and increases \$10 per ton per year for 20 years.

Such a program would give the market a clear signal with minor near-term impacts but a significant and predictable basis for long-term investments in our energy infrastructure.

TIM OOLMAN
Jeny's Street
Daniel Island

In the know

I like to know what I'm getting when I buy food in restaurants and grocery stores.

I'd also like to know what I'm getting when I vote for a gubernatorial candidate. That's why I will not consider a candidate in the June 12 primaries unless I know the name of the candidate for lieutenant governor.

Considering that people vote absentee in many cases, I hope primary candidates will announce their running mates as soon as possible.

LARRY LIBATER
Carriage Lane
Charleston

'Project Zebra'

The recent AP article about Elizabeth City, N.C., rejecting a Russian World War II monument is missing key information. The monument would memorialize a top-secret collaboration called "Project Zebra."

Project Zebra was arranged by Roosevelt and Stalin to train 300 Soviet soldiers in Elizabeth City. Those airmen were then dispatched to the Atlantic and Pacific theaters, where they destroyed numerous Nazi U-boats and Japanese submarines without losing a single plane.

In the end, Project Zebra was more than a successful mission. The Soviet and American teams shared experiences that created and cemented genuine bonds of trust and mutual respect. Only one year ago, as the article notes, the City Council voted unanimously to accept

the monument. Reversing that now due to "the current climate" strikes me as small-minded, cowardly and disrespectful.

The monument belongs in Elizabeth City, and its leaders need to take a page from this bit of hidden history. They shouldn't throw the American trainers under the bus with the courageous pilots who pulled off their missions without a glitch.

CAROL OROPALLO
Ashley Avenue
Charleston

Rich vs. poor

Re the April 24 column "Social Security growing more generous, not less."

I don't have to read the National Review to know what it's about if it's representative of senior editor Ramesh Ponnuru's view of poor people. Thank goodness for the recent letter to the editor reminding us that most people aren't rich and don't think like Mr. Ponnuru.

When an average retiree receives \$16,848 a year in Social Security, and many receive less, it makes you wonder. I would think people with adequate income to live on once did not have that income and can relate to those who don't.

Mr. Ponnuru may come from a different mindset where poverty is seen as a way of life, nothing more.

JOAN HOYTE
W. Liberty Meadows Drive
Summerville

Sour grapes

As a former New Yorker, I read with dismay the comments made by the writers of a letter about their dissatisfaction with the 9/11 memorial. It appears they and many others who were grievously touched by that awful day were not well served by New York due to the many interests vying for prominence.

Their warning to the citizens of Mount Pleasant and Charleston "not to find themselves in a similar situation" should be heeded. And the lessons they learned can be taken into account when it comes to how competing interests go about shared projects.

New York is one of the greatest cities in the world. However, its skyline and image have changed much. Ideas and interests related to memorials and to development act almost like a locomotive, running over anything in its path.

It is evident that whenever there is an imbalance between developers and communities bad things can happen.

Charleston should be cognizant of New York's shortcomings when it comes to engaging in "development." Progress is great, but failing to take into account the wants and needs of citizens prevents them from relating properly to the meaningful places they all share.

RICHARD UJVARY
Waterlily Way
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