

# Bills would trim spending, government

Prefiled measures also seek more transparency in government

By WAYNE WASHINGTON and LEROY CHAPMAN JR.  
Staff writers

A Republican election sweep and a yawning state budget gap are driving the legislative agenda which is taking shape in the nearly 600 bills that have been put before the General Assembly.

This week lawmakers finished two weeks of filing bills to be considered when the Legislature convenes Jan. 11. Last month's election results, in which Republicans swept all nine constitutional offices and grew their majority in the S.C. House, are reflected in the broad themes that emerge from the hun-

dreeds of bills. Republicans say South Carolina voters who increased their power want the General Assembly to spend less, shrink government and operate more openly. That's the objective of dozens of the bills that have been filed. Examples of shrinking government are bills to combine the state Department of Probation, Pardons and Parole with the state Department of Corrections. About a

dozen bills demand spending caps, limiting year-to-year budget growth. Spending less is a must; state lawmakers will return to Columbia to face what is predicted to be at least a \$700 million gap between expected revenue and spending obligations. "We are again facing very tight budget year," said Greg Foster, spokesman for S.C. House Speaker Bobby Harrell, noting House Republi-

cans will unveil their legislative agenda in the coming weeks. Foster said legislation filed that would require more colleges and public schools to put more of their spending online is a must to make sure limited dollars are spent wisely. That, he said, is what voters have demanded. "This is so people can see where their tax dollars are going," Foster said. Democrats, though, say

Republicans are using the prefile session to revive failed legislative efforts popular with conservative voters, such as bills requiring picture ID at the voting booth and bills adopting an Arizona-style immigration law. The first prefiled Senate bill, put forth by six Republicans leaders that include Senate President Pro Tem Glenn McConnell of Charles-

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## Holiday tradition

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIM DOMINICK  
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ONLINE: More photographs at [thestate.com](http://thestate.com)



Heathwood Hall Episcopal School kindergartners presented the Christmas story Thursday morning. The doves sing one of the Christmas songs.



Above, the wise men start their journey to the manger. The play was dedicated to Barbara Bryan, the Lower School music teacher, who helped create it.

At right, the donkeys and cows sing one of the Christmas songs.



## 3 local schools score well on AP tests

Also, more S.C. students took, passed tests in 2010

By LEROY CHAPMAN JR.  
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Spring Valley, Dreher and Lexington high schools were some of the most successful schools in the state at conquering Advanced Placement tests, which give students a chance to earn college credits through an end-of-year standardized test. The State Department of Education announced Thursday that more S.C. students took and passed Advanced Placement exams in 2010. But the rate at which students passed dipped slightly. There were 15,802 passing Advanced Placement exams in 2010, a 5.6 percent increase. More students took AP exams, too. There were 28,763 AP exams taken in 2010, an 8.7 percent increase. But the percentage of tests with scores between 3 and 5, which is considered passing, dropped to 54.9 percent from 56.6 percent statewide. Still, State Superintendent

of Education Jim Rex is pleased to see more students stepping up to the challenge of Advanced Placement work. Students can take AP tests in dozens of subjects, from history, English and math, to foreign languages and art history. "One of the most encouraging trends we've seen has been South Carolina's continuing improvement with Advanced Placement courses and exams," Rex said. "More students take these challenging classes every year, and they've responded with higher numbers of exam scores earning college credit." Students at Richland 2's Spring Valley High School passed 84 percent of AP exams, the best pass rate among Richland, Lexington and Kershaw county schools. Lexington High, in Lexington 1, passed 75 percent of its AP exams, Dreher, in Richland 1, passed at a 73 percent rate, and Dutch Fork, in Lexington-Richland 5, passed 68 percent of its exams. To see how all local schools fared on AP exams, go to [thestate.com](http://thestate.com).

## Lexington sheriff's sergeant is named top employee

Lexington County Sheriff's Sgt. Kevin Blackmon recently was named the department's employee of the quarter for the third quarter of 2010. Blackmon, selected by the Lexington County Sheriff's Advisory Council, was recognized for successfully resolving more than 2,000 arrest warrants between June 1 and Sept. 24. Blackmon also received the Sheriff's Department Special Achievement Award. Blackmon, of Lexington, joined the Sheriff's Department in May 2004 and is currently a supervisor in the warrant division. During a three-month period, Blackmon conducted an audit of all Sheriff's Department arrest warrants



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and successfully resolved 2,013 cases, a significant number of which involved fraudulent checks. "Kevin is a dedicated team player who focuses on finding solutions to problems," Sheriff James Metts said. Vince Ford, senior vice president of community services at Palmetto Health, recently received the March of Dimes Elaine Whitelaw Volunteer Service Award. The award, created in

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## Beaten toddler said to be doing OK

Child will stay with his aunt since his mother is among those charged

By DAVID W. MacDOUGALL  
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**NORTH CHARLESTON** — Louis Wright is going to be OK. The 18-month-old boy, who suffered extensive injuries when he was allegedly abused by three teenagers

last month, was to be released from the hospital Thursday, according to the Mount Pleasant lawyer who set up a fund to help the child's family pay medical expenses. "He will be staying with his aunt, who sounds like a really sweet person," said Nathan Hughey. "She said he is expected to make a full recovery." Louis was admitted to the pediatric intensive care unit at Medical University Hospital on Nov. 30, the morning

after he was allegedly pummeled and tossed around by three teenage boys at a house in North Charleston. According to arrest warrants and a North Charleston police incident report, the abuse took place during the evening of Nov. 29 and came to light the next day, when the child's mother rushed him to a hospital. Doctors called police to report suspicious injuries after they found the child had

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### SOUTH CAROLINA DEATHS

Albertha Bellinger, Estill George Bernard, Monetta Brunell Berry, Saluda Donna Boan, Society Hill Sarah Burress, Lexington George Campsen Jr., Isle of Palms

Theo Corbett, Pelion Elroy Dantzer, Orangeburg Walter "Cliff" Ervin, North Beverly Eslick, Lexington Kedreana Felder, Sumter Laurie Ferguson, Allendale Ethel Finley, Columbia

Sylvester Gaines, Florence Charles Holmes Sr., Sumter Curtis Holt Jr., Columbia Wallace Humphries, Columbia Miriam Jackson, Columbia

John Johnson Jr., South Congaree Katie Johnson, Columbia Roy Johnson, West Columbia Sarah Kelly, Ridgeway Horace Linton, Chesterfield

Joan Moss-Robinson, Sumter Mamie Owens, Marion Mary Parker, Hartsville Lula Perry, Columbia LeVern Prince, Sumter Virginia Rhodes, Hartsville

Maxine Sapp, Lancaster Katie Thompson, Columbia Mildred Threatt, Leesville Ivera Ward, Columbia

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