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Editorial, Fighting for Reedy funds,  
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EDITORIALS

# Fighting for Reedy funds

State settlement for Reedy River spill needs protection. The money is still in limbo.

Greenville County residents should be encouraged that the General Assembly is moving to prevent the misuse of any funds collected by the state for environmental cleanup caused by the massive June 1995 Reedy River oil spill.

There is some reason for concern, however, that federal prosecutors and Attorney General Charlie Condon will sue manufacturing over civil claims against Colonial Pipeline, the Atlanta-based petroleum carrier responsible for the one-million-gallon spill.

Earlier this year Condon announced that Colonial had agreed to pay \$6.5 million to the state for damages to the Reedy through a 22-mile stretch of the river in southern Greenville and Laurens counties. The agreement represents the largest environmental settlement in the state's history.

This apparent good news was quickly followed by confusion over the ultimate destination of the money from the settlement. The attorney general indicated the money might go into the state's general fund, where it likely would be distributed for legislators' pet projects all over the state.

State environmental officials and local groups wanted the settlement directed to a state trust fund set up to receive money collected for environmental damages. This would ensure the money was used to restore and enhance the Reedy River and the area surrounding the spill.

Last week the House of Representatives passed a joint resolution directing the settlement to the trust fund and requiring it for restoring the Reedy. It appears there's also strong support in the Senate for ensuring any money recovered from Colonial Pipeline goes to the area where the environmental devastation occurred.

Legislation is needed to uphold the credibility of state actions against companies that despoil the environment. Obviously, the public would have little confidence in a process that resulted in large settlements generated by the attorney general's office going for purposes unrelated to restoring the actual environmental damages.

If the Reedy River settlement goes to the trust fund, the state will follow a defined process for disbursing it that will involve state environmental and health officials and local citizens.

A problem now, though, is that the attorney general still hasn't signed off on the settlement or required it.

Condon seems to have reconsidered the deal since the U.S. Attorney for South Carolina criticized his negotiations, suggesting he would get more money by cooperating with federal officials pursuing civil action against Colonial Pipeline.

If the attorney general believes the settlement is fair, he should proceed with it on his own without help from the federal government, which has a long record of indifference to Colonial Pipeline's problems.

The point is to both reinforce corporate responsibility for environmental disasters and to promptly recover money that can be used to enhance the damaged area.

# Wrong law

A federal court jury in Chicago granted the nation's anti-abortion movement what Monday's racketeering verdict against three activists and two national anti-abortion organizations. The two groups and their leaders were found guilty of 21 acts of physical intimidation and violence in connection with widespread organized protests of abortion clinics.

The verdict is shocking because it applies the multipronged and severe punishment elements of the 1970 federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations law, which was fashioned to combat organized crime, to the protest behaviors of political groups. This is a perversion of law, even if it is legally defensible. Laws against assault and disorderly conduct are the proper means to curtail the excesses of overzealous protesters of abortion, nuclear wastes or endless other perceived evils.

The occurrence of these protest groups needed curbing. RICO plainly needs amending to exclude its application to protest groups.

# Opinion

## Activist government enters new era

Drive to reduce the size of government has merely redirected federal spending to new recipients.

When President Clinton said the era of big government was over, he must have meant it was over for some people.

It hasn't gotten much notice in the midst of all the noise about the Republican budget-cutting revolution in Congress, and Clinton's political views to the right, that the federal government is still quite large — elephantine, actually. Moreover, the government's not shrinking, it's growing in a pretty impressive rate.



Mac Thrower

Clinton and his GOP foes seem to have found middle ground on middle-class entitlements and spending programs. The president's initiative-specific benefits in areas such as health insurance and child care, and Republicans responded by going along or making counter-proposals offering similar benefits.

The bipartisan state clearly puts the interests of the middle class before the interests of the poor. It's strikingly apparent in the new state and federal policies on welfare.

Welfare is the only area of domestic spending that both Democrats and Republicans targeted for reform and substantial cuts. Since President Clinton signed the welfare reform bill in 1996, the welfare rolls have declined sharply, even in relatively poor states such as South Carolina.

I agree with the vast majority of Americans who believe it's good news that fewer poor people are dependent on the government. The goal is to make people more self-reliant, not to strip away programs aimed at redistributing the nation's wealth. And that's why the Republican conservatives no longer stand in the way of the federal efforts attempting to stop the growth of government power.

For some recipients of federal assistance to take more responsibility for their own lives.

It's good for the poor to take care of themselves, why isn't it good for working Americans to take care of their own health insurance?

If we expect the poor to find work, why don't we expect middle-class families to pay for their child care, without federal tax breaks?

If the poor can support themselves in the private sector, why can't artists subsidize by the taxpayers make it on their own?

Perhaps the best way to capture the accomplishments of the so-called New Democrats and Republican revolutionaries is to note that the federal welfare entitlement is history, but the National Endowment for the Arts still stands.

The NEA, of course, has many middle-class upper-class supporters who want public funds used to subsidize their personal cultural interests. These liberal arts patrons are playing an increasingly important role in Washington and state capitals across the country.

In the emerging therapeutic state, the federal government tries to smooth life's path for the poor but insure equality, responsibility to do every creature with a new program or mandate.

Neither the old liberals who pursued social justice nor the traditional conservatives who championed smaller government will find a great deal to like about this new political environment.

Perhaps both groups will find consolation in waiting for the inevitable coming of the economic wave the new government activists are riding.

Mac Thrower, associate editorial board editor, can be reached at 298-4448, or mthrower@greenview.com.



### LETTERS FROM READERS

#### Religious freedom is most assuredly the issue

De April 19th your paper published a letter to the editor under the headline: Religion is not the issue. It is the writer said: "Zanez Appeals Board member Avery Ward is absolutely correct when he says religion is not the issue, it is a matter of money."

Religion itself may not be the issue, but religious freedom is the issue. Both the South Carolina and U.S. Constitutions forbid laws that prohibit the free exercise of religion. This means that religious freedom may not be prohibited even as a result of a law not specifically intended to do so.

If the government can deprive us of our rights simply by making something else the issue, then none of our rights are safe.

Charles P. Cramer II  
Greenville

#### Evolution study belongs in social studies class

Alvin Probst's article in The Greenville News April 19th describes an interesting state of despondency in the evolutionist National Academy of Sciences. Apparently, its members still hold the outdated belief that evolution is fact, because they complain about the statement that the subject can be taught as theory and not as fact. Actually, evolution is not even a scientific theory, because it cannot be tested by the scientific method. It is an unscientific hypothesis or speculation about origins that contradicts the basic laws and facts of science. It is the creation myth upon which the religion of secular humanism is based.

In proper place for study in the public schools is not the science classroom but the social studies classroom where it should be examined in comparison with the classical myths and other religions of the world.

Albert S. Anderson, M.D.  
Flores

#### Remember real meaning of Memorial Day holiday

In a few weeks the national holiday to remember our country's brave men and women will be observed on Memorial Day. It seems however that most people don't have more other events planned or held on that day that has little or nothing at all to do with regard to the true meaning of that very special day.

Memorial Day should not be a day or weekend event for automobile sales, department store sales or even a well-attended annual ballroom event. Instead it should be a weekend and day celebration of thanks and gratitude for our veterans that have paid the ultimate sacrifice so that we can still live in freedom in the greatest country on the earth.

It is also a day and weekend where those men and women that

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have served our country have passed away are not confined to a hospital or nursing facility should be remembered. It is this writer's opinion that instead of Memorial Day and Veterans Day there should always remember the sacrifices these brave souls have made for our country 365 days a year.

Rick Kelley  
Greenville

#### Flooding is a problem for many county drivers

Having lived by Broad Creek in Del Norte subdivision for 15 years I have seen my lack of luck first-hand in recent times. What I have found interesting is that the water almost always reaches the same point in my yard, which suggests that something downstream is acting like a dam.

Based on what I have seen during the floods the "dam" is the Belding Springs Road bridge. Instead of spending millions to rebuild the river creek, why not simply stabilize the bedrock areas and improve them?

In the 1980s a group of Del Norte residents cleaned our creek

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of the creek and found an eight foot wall of bedrock caught on the piers under the Hudson Road bridge. I don't imagine the Army Corps of Engineers and millions of dollars to fix that problem.

After the loss of lives in the 1995 flood, I would hope our county officials see that flooding is not just a problem for a few property owners, but for all who travel on flood-prone roads. In 1995 the flood peaked at 3 a.m. Sunday morning when there is little traffic.

If it had been only 36 hours earlier or later those roads would have been jammed with school buses and vans full of children.

Robert Schaffel  
Greenville

#### LETTERS

We welcome letters on timely news related topics. Include home address, daytime telephone number and signature. All letters are verified. We edit letters for brevity, grammar and clarity. Please limit your letter to fewer than 250 words. Send letters: MAIL: Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 1848, Greenville, SC 29602. FAX: 863-252-7991. E-MAIL: mthrower@greenview.com