

USC BASKETBALL

■ **Postseason hopes:** Gamecocks on the bubble for NIT invitation

SPORTS, C1

■ **All-SEC team:** Downey selected to first team; Muldrow makes defensive squad

SPORTS, C4



DINING OUT: WHAT'S GOOD AT A TUCKED-AWAY ITALIAN EATERY IN WEST COLUMBIA? LIFE&STYLE, D1

The State

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2010

DSS CASE

\$5 million fraud keeps going and growing

Paper trail has led to 350 suspects

By JOHN MONK
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The case involving the theft of \$5 million in Medicaid money at the S.C. Department of Social Services has swollen to encompass enough alleged criminals — an estimated 350 at last count — to populate a small town.

"It's the biggest one I remember us prosecuting," said acting U.S. Attorney for South Carolina Kevin McDonald.

"It was a criminal 'version of multilevel marketing.'"

KEVIN MCDONALD, acting U.S. attorney for South Carolina

It's bigger than an illegal Upstate marriage scheme years ago, with its 200-plus defendants. Bigger than the 95-defendant food-stamp-fraud case in Newberry County in recent years.

And in a state accustomed to stunning and headline-grabbing crimes by officials — from State Treasurer Thomas Ravenel's cocaine distribution to Agriculture Commissioner Charlie Sharp's taking bribes from cockfighters — the DSS fraud is in a class by itself.

And its threads continue to unravel. Some are pleading guilty, three more so far this month. More people still could be arrested. And more about how the case was cracked is coming to light.

At the DSS fraud's center was Paul Moore, 60, the agency's former finance director. The department handles hundreds of

SEE **DSS PAGE A5**

NEXT SMALL-SCREEN SENSATION?

COMING TO A LIVING ROOM NEAR YOU — 3D!

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Samsung and Panasonic will start selling 3-D TVs in U.S. stores this week, inaugurating what TV makers hope is the era of 3-D viewing in the living room.

Samsung Electronics Co. announced Tuesday that it is selling two 3-D sets. Combined with the required glasses and a 3-D Blu-ray player, the prices start at about \$3,000 for a 46-inch screen.

Panasonic Corp. has said it will sell its first 3-D set today.

Sony Corp. said Tuesday it will start selling

SEE **TV PAGE A8**

CROMARTIE RESIGNS COUNCIL SEAT; VOTERS TO CHOOSE REPLACEMENT



E.W. Cromartie leaves City Hall after resigning from Columbia City Council on Tuesday. See a photo gallery at thestate.com.

COUNCIL TO SELECT ELECTION DATE TODAY

By ADAM BEAM
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Columbia City Councilman E.W. Cromartie, facing a year in prison for not paying federal income taxes, resigned Tuesday afternoon, and City Council members will vote this morning to schedule an election to replace him.

It's unclear when that election will be. The State Election Commission says the city is required to hold the election April 6 — the date of the city's next general election, 27 days away. If City Council members don't set that date, the com-

mission says, the governor will be forced to step in and do it for them.

But some worry an April 6 election is too soon and would not give voters enough time to make an informed decision. Not only has filing opened and closed for the other seats but the ballots were to be printed Monday.

"It will be a very divisive vote, in my view," Mayor Bob Coble said. "But you have to follow the law."

State law says: "A vacancy in the office of mayor or council shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term at the next regular election or at a special

election if the vacancy occurs one hundred eighty days or more prior to the next general election."

Two state attorney general opinions, one from 1979 and one from 1994, interpret the "shall" language to be "clearly mandatory and cannot be waived." State Election Commission executive director Marci Andino told the city Tuesday the election must be held April 6 because Cromartie's resignation is within 180 days of the upcoming election.

However, the city could schedule a

SEE **CROMARTIE PAGE A8**

INSIDE

■ **WARREN BOLTON** points out that the good E.W. Cromartie did during his long City Council career was overshadowed by the bad. **Page A6**
■ Mayor candidate Gary Myers first said he would drop out of the race, then said he would stay in when asked about his bankruptcy and IRS debt. **Page B1**

ONLINE

■ **ELECTIONS** More about the candidates and issues in the city's April 6 elections, thestate.com

inthenews

S.C. JOB OUTLOOK BRIGHTER

Job prospects appear to be improving in South Carolina as more businesses said they expect to add workers in the second quarter than in the first quarter, according to a survey released Tuesday.

In Columbia, it might be a good time to find work in financial activities, education and health services, and leisure and hospitality, the survey suggested. **Page B6.**

Senate to weigh huge tax breaks for mall

By RODDIE BURRIS
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Whether South Carolina should give a mall developer \$100 million in tax incentives could be debated as early as today in the state Senate.

Okatie Crossings, a proposed \$400 million shopping mall outside Hardeeville, has stirred a heated debate over when the state should give businesses money to set up shop.

S.C. POLITICS TODAY

For breaking news from the General Assembly, go to thestate.com/politics and click on S.C. Politics Today.

The Okatie project has gained wide support in the General Assembly because it is expected to boost jobs in one of the poorest tourism economies in the state.

But opponents say retail develop-

ment is not a good use of state money.

"Can you believe they are against a jobs program in one of the poorest counties in the state?" asked Sen. Robert Ford, D-Charleston, while locked in a Senate floor debate Tuesday over union voting.

Facts and figures have been all over the map on the Okatie project.

SEE **OKATIE PAGE A3**



Today's Weather

8 a.m. Cloudy 51
1 p.m. Chance of showers 65
7 p.m. Chance of showers 62

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LAWSUITS AGAINST TOYOTA PILING UP

Toyota is facing at least 89 class-action lawsuits that could cost the besieged automaker \$3 billion in the wake of safety recalls. **Page B6**

SalaryDatabase

New numbers for thousands of state employees thestate.com