MAY 16, 2006
POLITICS

BY **JAMES SHANNON**

New science prize has Greenville roots.
Gimme an H!

Congressman Bob Inglis stepped onto the national stage last week for the first time since his ill-fated challenge of Sen. Ernest Hollings in the late 90s. By a vote of 416-to-6, the House of Representatives approved legislation sponsored by the Greenville Republican creating the "H-Prize" to promote hydrogen as an alternative fuel source, modeled after the Ansari X Prize that led to the first privately developed manned space vehicle. A complicated formula will award prizes in alternating years for technological advances in hydrogen use and the creation of an actual working prototype vehicle propelled by hydrogen. Scientists will rely on lessons learned in the past to avoid repetition of previous hydrogen transportation disasters like the Hindenburg explosion.

For Inglis, the focus on hydrogen-powered vehicles not only addresses the nation's need to develop alternative energy sources but also could create new jobs at the International Center for Automotive Research currently under construction along I-85 in Greenville. Since returning to Congress in 2005, Inglis has bucked the anti-science, anti-environment trend of the Bush administration. He voted against oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge when it was presented as a stand-alone amendment, although he did vote for the House version of the Energy Bill in its final form that authorized ANWR drilling. In early 2006, Inglis was part of a delegation that visited the shrinking polar ice cap of Antarctica. After touring the National Science Foundation-funded McMurdo and South Pole research stations, he returned a believer in global warming despite some vehement naysayers on the GOP side of the aisle.

Public money funds the Hunley.
$100 Million Relic

In a three-part investigation in *The State* newspaper, John Monk reports that the costs of preservation efforts on the Confederate submarine Hunley are approaching $100 million. Despite widespread fundraising activities that created the public perception that private donations would provide the bulk of the money, an analysis by The State finds that more than 85% of the projected costs will be paid by taxpayers. How could this happen in a state where lawmakers claim we are too poor to fix dilapidated schools or buy new buses? Two words: Glenn McConnell.

When the sunken sub was discovered in Charleston harbor, it generated a lot of attention, not least from Sen. McConnell, president pro tem of the SC Senate. The Republican from North Charleston is described as one of the most powerful state lawmakers in the past century, and McConnell has wielded that power skillfully to maximize funding for Hunley-related enterprises. Seen here dressed in the Confederate general's uniform he wore to deliver the eulogy for the Hunley's crew, McConnell's lengthy tenure in the General Assembly and encyclopedic knowledge of arcane Senate rules are key to his vast influence. As chair of the Hunley Commission, McConnell appoints its members and has various state agencies provide support as needed. The Department of Public Safety pays $100,00 a year for security; other departments provide employees and pay their salaries and benefits. Clemson University announced last fall they would build a $35-million campus centered around the Hunley. Guess who's paying for that?

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