

Title: **Monuments to politicians are everywhere in SC**
 Author:
 Size: 39.37 column inches
 Greer, SC Circulation: 9589



Monuments to politicians are everywhere in SC

Take a trip down any major highway, back road, or waterway and you'll likely come across the Senator So-and-So Interchange or the Representative So-and-So Frontage Road. State lawmakers love to name roads and structures after each other, with the result that every other road or building in the state has one of their names on it.

In Washington, these little vanity projects are called "Monuments to Me." How many are there in South Carolina?

Former Senator John C Land III has the distinct privilege of having not one but two boat landings bearing his name - one on Lake Marion and one on Lake Moultrie.

Who knows how many fishing trips have been delayed or thwarted by hapless fishermen showing up at the wrong John C. Land III boat landing.

A few other examples come to mind: the "Lt. Governor-Senator Andre Bauer Interchange" (Columbia), the "Glenn McConnell Parkway" (Charleston), the "Sen. Jon Courson Interchange" (Columbia), the "John W. Matthews Jr. Industrial Park" (Orangeburg), the "John N. Hardee Expressway," and the "High K. Leatherman, Sr. Terminal" (Charleston).

Most taxpayers will probably agree that there is something wrong with politicians using public money to immortalize themselves. For a currently sitting lawmaker, it's surely an electoral advantage when voters are made to see his name on their drive to work every day. It wouldn't be too much of a stretch to interpret these monuments as taxpayer-funded campaign signs.

And that becomes a real problem when - as happens from time to time - that currently sitting lawmaker gets wrapped up in a scandal.

Think of Hope Ferry Landing. In 2003 there was a resolution that renamed Hope Ferry Landing, in Lexington County, to the James R. Metts Landing. At the time James Metts was the sheriff of Lexington County.

The important principle here is a very simple one: that politicians shouldn't be permitted to aggrandize their names and reputations with taxpayer money.

In 2015, former Sherriff Metts was sentenced to 12 months in prison for his part in harboring illegal aliens.

Not surprisingly, shortly after the charges were announced, legislation was introduced that returned the James R. Metts landing to its original name.

Or take former Lieutenant Governor Earl Morris, from Pickens.

There was once a highway named after him in Pickens County.

Then, in 2004, he was convicted of securities fraud and sentenced to four years in prison. It has since reverted to its original name, Highway 153.

The important principle here is a very simple one: that politicians shouldn't be permitted to aggrandize their names and reputations with taxpayer money.

The same principle should probably apply to the "introduction" of local delegations from the floor of the House and Senate - a longstanding practice that amounts to little more than campaigning on public time.

If lawmakers want to name something after themselves, maybe they should do it with private money.

This guest editorial was submitted by Phillip Cease, director of research at the South Carolina Policy Council.