

Orangeburg man sought in fatal shooting

SPECIAL TO THE T&D

Orangeburg County Sheriff’s Office investigators are seeking a man wanted in a fatal shooting, Sheriff Leroy Ravenell said Wednesday.

“If you have any possible idea where he is at, call us,” Ravenell said. “And if you’re assisting him in any way, we’ll be calling on you as well.”

Investigators are looking for 20-year-old Ja’sean Fritz of Orangeburg.

The Hoffman Street male is being sought on charges of murder, possession of a weapon during a violent crime, and conspiracy in connection with a fatal July

30 shooting.

Orangeburg County Sheriff’s investigators were called to Felder Street around 7 p.m. after receiving reports of a shooting. Investigators arrived to find a pickup truck had crashed into a building.

The driver inside of the vehicle appeared to have suffered a gunshot wound to the upper body.

Orangeburg County Sheriff Leroy Ravenell is asking the public for help finding Ja’sean Fritz of Orangeburg in a fatal shooting.

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POLICY BY THE NUMBERS



USA TODAY NETWORK

Photo taken on Thursday, May 14, 2026 during the final scheduled day of legislative session at the Statehouse in Columbia, South Carolina.

USC institute to seek insights from state records

ZAK KOESKE
TNS/The State

South Carolina state agencies are awash in data, but the valuable information they collect about education, employment and the economy too often remains siloed and unexamined.

Lawmakers are hoping to change that.

The General Assembly has set aside money in this year’s budget to create a public policy institute that will be tasked with integrating and analyzing government data collected across several state agencies to support informed decision-making by state and local policymakers.

The institute, which will be housed at the University of South Carolina, will focus on education and workforce issues to start, but over time could branch out into areas such as public health, economic development, public safety and infrastructure.

“It’s a really interesting concept,” said state Sen. Sean Bennett, R-Dorchester, a major proponent of the initiative. “It has a lot of potential to help policymakers make better decisions — data-based decisions instead of emotionally-based decisions — and I see it working in conjunction with many of our agencies.”

The senator said the institute would be modeled after the Helios Education Foundation, an Arizona nonprofit that uses data to help improve educational outcomes for low-income and historically underrepresented students in Arizona and Florida.

Bennett first visited Helios several years ago as part of an education fellowship program for state political leaders. Impressed by what he saw, he got to thinking about replicating their work in the Palmetto State.

Last fall, the senator took a group of state agency officials to tour the organization’s Phoenix campus and said he was encouraged to learn that South Carolina was “way ahead” of many states with respect to interagency data sharing.

“We’re just trying to take that ball and run with it,” said Bennett, who envisions a future where South Carolina lawmakers can request data analyses in real time as they wrestle with complex policy and budgetary decisions.

“There’s really all kinds of uses if we’ve got good data and a good way to visualize that data and understand it,” he said.

The General Assembly appropriated \$1.8 million for the center in this year’s budget, which could be approved as soon

as next week, and is expected to pitch in a comparable amount for the next several years to help get it off the ground.

Bennett said he wants to get the institute up-and-running quickly, but acknowledged it would likely be multiple years before it’s fully operational.

“This is a big undertaking, and it’s an important undertaking,” the Dorchester Republican said. “We want to make sure we get it right.”

USC’s role

Lawmakers opted to locate the public policy institute at USC, rather than within state government, to keep it nimble and efficient.

The decision did not sit well with state Sen. Wes Climer, R-York, who said he supported the concept, but objected to USC’s involvement with the project.

Climer, who is running to succeed U.S. Rep. Ralph Norman in the 5th Congressional District, argued that USC had “every one of the vices on steroids that are within government” and questioned the university’s ability to objectively process and present data.

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