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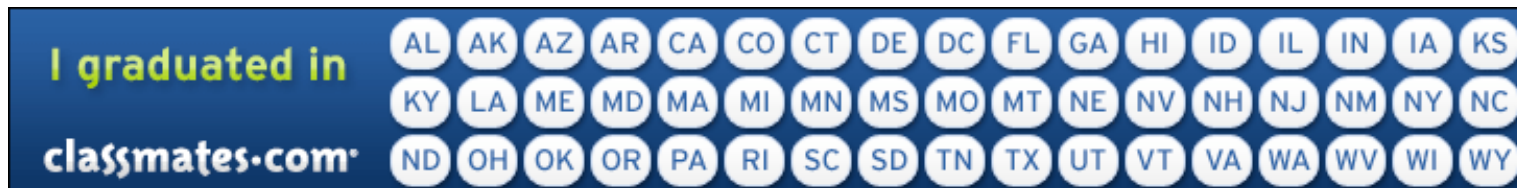
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Emergency budget talks might crimp today's forum

From staff reports

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A forum for state and local candidates from 6 to 8 p.m. today at the Spartanburg County Headquarters Library could be the only chance many voters have to see their November choices side by side.

Initially, 16 candidates in eight contested state and county races were invited to the forum, which will be in the library's Barrett Room.

State Sen. Glenn Reese, D-Spartanburg, who faces Republican challenger Mike Gardner, was the only

candidate who did not plan to be there.

But an emergency session of the state Legislature that starts today might put the squeeze on the only other Statehouse incumbent in a contested race: Rep. Lanny Littlejohn, R-Pacolet. Littlejohn said he's hoping for a short day so he can get out of Columbia by 4 or 4:30 p.m.

If so, he plans to make it to the forum, even if he's a little late.

Littlejohn faces political newcomer Weldon Davis, a Democrat.

Another lingering question among the forum's sponsors - which include Upstate Forever, the League of Women Voters and several news organizations, including the Herald-Journal - is whether to keep the County Council District 1 race in tonight's event.

Incumbent County Councilman Michael Brown, a Democrat, was to face Republican Donna Hicks in November to hold on to the seat he won earlier this year.

But on Friday, Hicks announced at a skeet shoot/fundraiser that

she was withdrawing from the County Council race and planned to run for mayor of Spartanburg next year.

It was not clear Sunday whether Brown would still be allowed to participate, as his race is no longer contested.

The Barrett Room holds 180 seats, and standing room will be available in the back.

Anyone who wants to submit a question for consideration by the media panel should arrive early.

This story appeared in print on page C1

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