

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA DIVISION

United States of America)
v.)
Robert John May, III,)
Defendant)

Case No. 3:25-CR-778 (CME)
MOTION TO CHANGE VENUE

RECD - USDC COLA SC
SEP 17 '25 PM 2:38

COMES NOW the defendant Robert John May, III, pursuant to Fed. R. Crim. 21(a) to: (1) Change venue for trial.

ANALYSIS

A defendant is entitled to a fair trial, free from publicity that prejudices jurors against the defendant at its onset. *Irvin v. Dowd* 366 U.S. 717, 722, 81 S.Ct. 1639, 1642, 6 L.Ed.2d 755 (1961). In determining whether to presume prejudice on pre-trial publicity, a court can consider the source of that publicity and the recency of it. *US v. Baker*, 925 F.2d 728; *Wansky* 487 F.2d at 93.

In the instant case, so great a prejudice due to

pre-trial publicity exists that the Defendant cannot obtain a fair and impartial trial. The publicity has been sustained, recent, and inflammatory with much of it originating via the government.

The original news of the Search of the Defendants home was made available to FitNews by a "Source" inside the government. The same media outlet was present during Defendant Mary's arrest. Again, such timing was only possible by communication between the government and media.


The government also publicly filed a CAFRA extension request on late October 2024 despite the case being under seal. The motion indicated an indictment was expected within 90 days and set off a series of media articles and videos announcing the defendant's pending indictment.

Recent coverage ~~has~~ labeled the Defendant as "child sex abuser," implying Defendant engaged in hands on abuse of children.

Attached to this filing are dozens of articles that only scratch the surface of media feed into the potential jury pool. This pre-trial publicity has tainted the jury pool and prevented a fair trial. Due to the quantity and prejudicial quality of the press coverage, it is impossible for the defendant to receive a fair trial in the district of SC, Columbia division.

Ref. July III

Former SC state Rep. RJ May to represent himself in trial on child pornography charges

 1.next.westlaw.com/Document/I0a1468908a0311f0831a817fe083838c/View/FullText.html

NewsRoom

9/5/25 Post & Courier (Charleston, SC) 1

2025 WLNR 22553829

Post and Courier, The (Charleston, SC)

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September 5, 2025

Section: A

Anna Wilder awilder@postandcourier.com

COLUMBIA - Former state Rep. RJ May will act as his own lawyer in his federal court trial where he faces 10 counts of distributing child sex abuse material.

May made the decision to represent himself during a status hearing Sept. 4. He had been with his assigned federal public defender, Jenny Smith, and co-counsel, Jeremy Thompson, when he made his decision to cut them loose.

It remains largely unclear why May chose to represent himself. The court went into a closed session where only the prosecution, defense, the judge and court staff were allowed in the room for about 10 minutes.

When the judge allowed the public back into the courtroom and asked May on the record why he was choosing to proceed alone, May referred to the private discussion without details. He stated there was an "impasse" between him and Smith on how to move forward with a motion to suppress some of the federal government's evidence.

May's counsel had previously made a motion to throw out evidence collected during the search of May's home in August 2024. Federal officers obtained multiple electronic devices. Smith stated there was a tremendous amount of data to comb through.

While May didn't give many details as to why he did away with his attorneys, he has previously stated in a financial affidavit that he cannot afford to retain private counsel and had no assets to his name beyond a 2017 Chevy Suburban.

During the Sept. 4 federal court hearing, May added he had "done his homework," when U.S. District Judge Cameron Currie was asking questions pertaining to his case.

May is not an attorney. Outside of his role as a state representative, he owned a political consulting firm, Ivory Tusk, where he ran campaigns, sometimes against seated Republicans in the House.

May, who was once a conservative firebrand in the House representing Lexington County, faces charges stemming from allegedly sending or receiving more than 1,000 messages containing child sex abuse material during a six-day stretch from March 30, 2024, to April 4, 2024, according to the criminal case filed against him. He resigned from his position in the House on Aug. 11 and has had several court hearings since.

He has maintained his innocence, and his legal team previously suggested his computer devices were hacked by a political enemy. He is currently being held at the Edgefield County Detention Center.

Inside the court hearing

Unlike previous court appearances, May's family was not present. He also spoke more frequently than previous hearings, addressing the judge during a series of questions about his case and mental aptitude.

May had originally requested hybrid representation, where he would represent himself during the period in which he could file motions up until the trial started. If he was unsuccessful in doing this, he would have his attorneys step in for the trial.

Currie denied his request, and stated the hybrid representation would be unconstitutional.

That's when May told Currie he wished to represent himself.

Part of the proceedings required for self representation included Currie ensuring that May voluntarily and knowingly was making the decision and that he was competent. She called it a very serious decision and emphasized May would give up valuable rights.

Currie asked May a series of questions, including whether he understood the charges and nature of consequences he faces.

She asked May whether he had the ability to consult on this decision with a lawyer, to which he replied yes. Currie then asked May if he was satisfied with his counsel, and he told her, yes, but still wanted to represent himself, and referred to what they had discussed during the

private session.

Currie ruled that May was competent to choose to represent himself.

Currie did allow for May's public defenders to act as "standby" counsel, which means they can assist him in limited ways. May's public defenders can sit behind May in trial to be there for him to ask questions. They can also help him when choosing a jury.

But Smith and Thompson can't assist him with cross examination, interrogation, case preparation or in filing motions. And they can't address the jury.

The court had to make arrangements for May to be able to review the evidence against him, including unsealing three search warrants made by the Lexington County Sheriffs Office before Homeland Security raided his house.

May will be taken to specific locations, including the Homeland Security office, to review evidence before he appears in court.

Defendants who choose to represent themselves in federal criminal cases are rare due to the complexity of the legal process involved.

May's jury selection is tentatively expected to start Oct. 8, with trial starting Oct. 9. Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Matthews told Currie he expects the trial to last six days, and added that he expects there to be at least eight witnesses.

If May is found guilty, he faces for each count a minimum of five years in prison and a maximum of 20 years; the maximum fine he could face is \$250,000.

A hearing on May's motion to suppress is still tentatively scheduled for Sept. 24.

Post and Courier Reporter Tiffany Tan contributed to this report.

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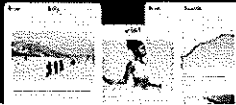


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Accused child sex abuser RJ May files motion to suppress evidence against him

Story by John Monk • 6d • 4 min read



by RJ May

Accused child sex abuser and former Republican hard-right state politician Robert "RJ" May on Wednesday filed a 30-plus page motion asking a federal judge to suppress government evidence against him.

The motion, written by hand at the Edgefield County Detention Center where May is being held without bond, was not immediately made public.

Government prosecutors must respond to the motion by Sept. 22, and U.S. Judge Cameron McGowan Currie will hold a hearing on the matter Sept. 24.

May's trial on distributing child sex abuse material is set to begin Oct. 9 at the Columbia federal courthouse. The trial is expected to last six trial days, ending Oct. 17, one day before May turns 39.

During Wednesday's 20-minute hearing, court officials scanned

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Ex-SC Rep. RJ May to represent himself at trial in his federal child sex abuse material case

South Carolina Public Radio | By Maayan Schechter

Published September 4, 2025 at 11:50 AM EDT



Jeffrey Collins/AP / AP

Republican South Carolina Rep. R.J. May of Lexington speaks to reporters during the organizational session for the House on Tuesday, Dec. 3, 2024, in Columbia, S.C. (AP Photo/Jeffrey Collins)

A federal judge on Thursday said she will allow former South Carolina Rep. RJ May to represent himself at his upcoming trial in his federal child sex abuse material case.

Federal Judge Cameron Currie told May he can have his two public defenders Jenny Smith and Jeremy Thompson on standby, but stressed they will have a very limited role.

giving up some very significant rights."

The unusual move by May, who is not a lawyer, means he will be in charge of preparing and filing his own motions, making his own opening and closing statements and cross-examining witnesses on his own. He also wouldn't have his own attorneys to question him should he decide to take the stand and testify.

Smith and Thompson also can't visit May in jail, unless instructed by the court.

May told Currie his decision to boot his lawyers was due to an impasse over a "motion to suppress" certain evidence.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Matthews told Currie there are seven total warrants.

May is only moving to suppress the residential search warrant.

"The court believes (you're) competent to represent yourself," Currie told May at his Thursday hearing that lasted under an hour.

Currie indicated Thursday that May's trial will move ahead as normal at Columbia's federal courthouse.

Jury selection is expected to start Oct. 8, with the trial beginning the day after.

Matthews told Currie he expects the government to call eight witnesses.

He said he would anticipate the trial stretching at least six days.

May faces 10 counts of distribution of child sex abuse material.

He is accused of using the screen name "joebidennnn69" to exchange more than 200 different files of children involved in sexual acts through the messaging app Kik in a nearly weeklong stretch back in 2024.

Federal prosecutors said May uploaded the documents using his home Wi-Fi connection and cellphone. May's former attorney suggested at his June arraignment hearing that someone could have used his Wi-Fi network after his wife posted a photo online that showed the account's password.

The attorney said May has many "political enemies."

May, a 38-year-old married father to two children under age 10, was first elected to the S.C. House in 2020 and last won reelection in 2024.

May resigned his House seat last month, saying the decision was "in the best interests of my family and constituents."

The former lawmaker ran a Republican political consulting firm and helped launch the hardline House Freedom Caucus, previously serving as the group's vice chair.

The special election for the Republican-leaning District 88 seat is scheduled for Dec. 23.

The primary will be held Oct. 21, and, if necessary, the runoff will be Nov. 4.

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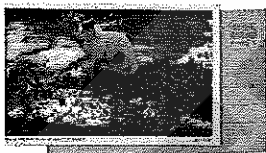


Maayan Schechter

Maayan Schechter (My-yahn Schek-ter) is a news reporter with South Carolina Public Radio and ETV. She worked at South Carolina newspapers for a decade, previously working as a reporter and then editor of The State's S.C. State House and politics team, and as a reporter at the Aiken Standard and the Greenville News. She grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, and graduated from the University of North Carolina-Asheville in 2013.

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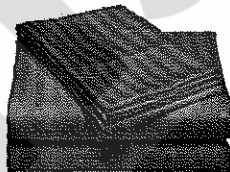


RJ May attacks search warrant, law officer in bid to suppress child sex evidence

Story by John Monk, Joseph Bustos • 6d • 3 min read

Accused child porn distributor former state Rep. RJ May has sharply criticized a federal law enforcement officer and described as fatally deficient a search warrant that led to the seizure of digital devices at his house last year.

May wrote in his court filing that Homeland Security Investigations agent Britton Lorenzen had a "reckless disregard for the truth" and misled a federal magistrate judge when she got a search warrant approved last summer to search his cell phones, laptops and other digital devices at his house in West Columbia.



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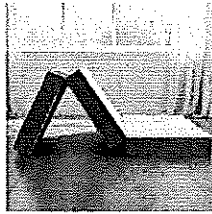


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May's allegations were made Wednesday in a 32-page handwritten motion to suppress government evidence against him in his upcoming federal trial on 10 counts of distributing child sexual abuse

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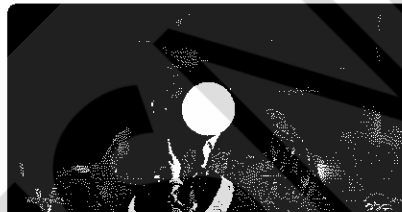
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RJ May appears as his own lawyer in court for the first time

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BY ANNA WILDER, AWILDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

SEP 10, 2025



S.C. state Rep. R.J. May, R-West Columbia, speaks on the House floor. May is currently in jail facing a federal indictment on 10 counts of distributing child sex abuse material.

FILE/JEFFREY COLLINS/AP

COLUMBIA — Former state Rep. RJ May appeared in federal court Sept. 10 to defend himself against charges associated with distributing child sexual abuse material, for the first time acting as his own lawyer after **dismissing his federal public defenders.**

May, 38, is not an attorney but was known in the Statehouse as a **firebrand conservative** and the founder of the far-right Freedom Caucus.

At the court hearing, he filed 30 handwritten pages as a part of a motion seeking to suppress evidence gathered during an August 2024 federal raid of his home where electronic devices were seized.

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May, of Lexington County, sat beside his former public defenders, Jenny Smith and Jeremy Thompson, throughout the entirety of his 30-minute appearance. The two attorneys now serve as standby counsel and can assist him only with procedural matters.

U.S. District Judge Cameron Currie said Smith and Thompson may provide templates to help him file motions correctly.

Since May is representing himself, he must be transported to review evidence at locations such as federal Homeland Security offices. When asked how many trips he would need, Currie told him to assess after his first session.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Matthews said prosecutors plan to file a motion covering other evidence of May's actions, to include "other crimes, wrongs or acts" that are not admissible to prove character but may be used to show motive or intent.

In a prior detention motion, prosecutors alleged May traveled to South America to meet prostitutes he contacted using a fake Facebook account.

May, a Republican, faces 10 counts of distributing child sex abuse material. He has pleaded not guilty. He resigned from the Legislature last month. His trial is expected to begin in October. He is scheduled to return to court Sept. 17.

Contact Wilder at awilder@postandcourier.com and follow her on X [@anna_wilder](https://twitter.com/anna_wilder).

ANNA WILDER



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South Carolina DAILY GAZETTE

How former Rep. RJ May is preparing from jail for trial on charges of sending child sex abuse videos

Skylar Laird

Wed, September 10, 2025 at 4:49 PM EDT

5 min read



Rep. RJ May, R-West Columbia, listens from the back of the House chamber during an organizational session on Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024 at the Statehouse

in Columbia, SC. (Photo by Mary Ann Chastain/Special to the SC Daily Gazette)

COLUMBIA — Former state Rep. RJ May walked into federal court Wednesday with a legal motion consisting of 32 pages handwritten on the front and back of lined paper.

May, a founder of the South Carolina House's ultra-conservative Freedom Caucus, opted last week to defend himself against charges of distributing images and videos of children being sexually abused. That means he must prepare for his October trial from his cell at the Edgefield County jail.

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He has remained there without bond since his arrest June 11. He resigned his House seat last month, amid the federal charges and an ongoing investigation into his conduct by the House Ethics Committee.

May's former public defense attorneys are on standby to help answer legal questions, but they can't help with the actual content of his case, U.S. District Judge Cameron McGowan Currie reminded May during a half-hour hearing Wednesday morning.

May used some of that help in court Wednesday. When prosecutors used legal jargon to describe how their evidence was numbered, May told the judge his standby attorneys were explaining the numbering system to him.

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He also asked Currie whether he could request a sample motion from an unrelated case to make sure his own motions were formatted correctly, which Currie approved.

To build his defense, May will go back and forth between the jail and the Office of Homeland Security in Columbia — a roughly 75-minute drive each way. The judge said he could make that trip as often as necessary.

The U.S. Attorney's Office has set up a room with a computer displaying all the evidence against him, and May can bring bagged lunches from the jail to eat while he goes through it, prosecutor Scott Matthews said Wednesday.

May's first trip to that room followed the hearing.

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There is a "tremendous amount of data to go through" in May's case, public defender Jenny Smith, one of May's standby attorneys, said previously. Currie asked May to get through as much as possible ahead of a hearing on his pre-trial motions Sept. 24.

May will be able to bring documents back to his jail cell, as long as they don't contain objectionable images, Currie said. He also has access to a tablet with the application Fastcase, a legal research system that May called the "poor man's Westlaw," referring to the more expensive legal research website available on state prisoners' tablets.

Jailed suspects can also use the tablets to send messages, receive approved images and emails and make phone calls, according to the Edgefield County Sheriff's Office. May has told relatives that he can use his tablet to listen to music or play games if he pays for them, according to messages obtained through an open records request.

May does not yet have access to the list of rules for federal criminal proceedings, he said, but Currie promised him attorneys would give that to him if the jail couldn't.

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May also can't access the online court filing system from jail, meaning he has to visit the federal courthouse in Columbia each time he wants to file a motion, as he did Wednesday.

He will come back to court next Wednesday to file any remaining pre-trial motions and receive prosecutors' motions, Currie said.

The motion May filed Wednesday asked Currie to throw out a search warrant used to collect cellphones, laptops, thumb drives and other electronics from his Lexington County house in August 2024.

While asking for the warrant, Britton Lorenzen, a special agent for Homeland Security, told a magistrate that investigators were likely to find images or videos depicting child sexual abuse even though the tip was several months old by that point because people who collect such images don't usually get rid of them, according to a sworn statement included with May's motion.

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During May's June detention hearing, Lorenzen said it was "very, very common" not to find actual images and videos of child sexual abuse on a suspect's phone or computer because of how easy it is to save media to the cloud or various apps.

May argued those statements contradicted each other, suggesting Lorenzen was lying in her statement to receive the search warrant.

Without that information, May argued, the search warrant was invalid and anything found on his devices couldn't be used in court. Lorenzen's assertion that people who collect child sexual abuse materials was integral to the judge issuing the warrant, and without it, the judge likely wouldn't have signed off, May argued.

While investigators didn't find videos or images on May's devices, they did find other evidence linking May's phone and laptop to a messaging account flagged for sending videos showing children being sexually abused, Lorenzen testified during his detention hearing. Data on May's phone suggested that he had repeatedly typed "joebidennnn69," the username of the flagged account, and that the Kik messaging app, along with several other encrypted apps, had been deleted from the device.

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Investigators also tracked the IP address used to send the messages back to May's house and personal phone, investigators said.

A hearing on that motion, along with any others filed in the coming weeks, is scheduled for Sept. 24.

Four Republicans and one Democrat have filed to replace May in the House. A primary election is scheduled for Oct. 21, followed by a general election Dec. 23.

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SOUTH CAROLINA

Suspended SC state Rep. RJ May resigns as he faces federal child porn charges

By Joseph Bustos

Updated August 12, 2025 11:43 AM  Gift Article

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Representative R.J. May, R-Lexington, watches as the South Carolina House of Representatives selects Murrell Smith, R-Sumter, as speaker on Tuesday, December 3, 2024. Joshua Boucher jboucher@thestate.com

State Rep. RJ May, a lawmaker facing a 10-count indictment for distributing child sexual abuse material, has resigned.

“I have decided that it is in the best interest of my family and constituents to resign immediately from the South Carolina House of Representatives,” May wrote in his resignation letter. “It has been an honor to serve the people of District 88.”

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The SC House Freedom Caucus, which May helped create, called on him to resign after he was taken into custody.

That group of hard-line conservative lawmakers welcomed the news of May's resignation as it has sought to distance itself from the embattled lawmaker.

"RJ May's resignation from the South Carolina House of Representatives is long overdue," the Freedom Caucus said in a statement. "The people of District 88 deserve true and honorable representation. While we welcome this resignation, we strongly believe that the SC House should have acted to expel RJ May after he was indicted for such heinous crimes."

House Majority Leader Davey Hiott said in a statement May's resignation should have happened a year ago, after the raid on May's house.

Hiott said hopes the House Ethics Committee investigation following the complaint he filed will continue regardless of the resignation.

"I hope members of the House Freedom Caucus don't think this will end this investigation," Hiott said in a statement. "As reported by the media, and recent statements made by Mr. May during his jailhouse confessions, they appear to have uncovered numerous questions over campaign finance irregularities. Frankly, (Freedom Caucus Chairman Jordan) Pace's comments today on behalf of the House Freedom Caucus and his efforts to quell that investigation only raise further concerns."

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May's letter to the House Speaker was sent Thursday. It was received Monday.

May, who owns a political consulting business, was elected to the Lexington County seat in 2020.

The race to replace May already is underway.

Brian Duncan, of Lexington County, who mounted a write-in campaign in October of 2024 in District 88 after federal agents raided May's house, has been gearing up to run in a special election expecting the seat to become vacant.

“When the special election occurs in the coming months, I will be ready to continue the work I began last year meeting with residents, listening to their concerns, and sharing my vision for a stronger District 88,” Duncan said in a statement.

This story was originally published August 11, 2025 at 2:00 PM.

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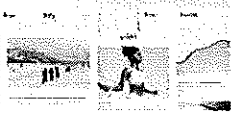
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Former Representative RJ May to represent himself in federal court

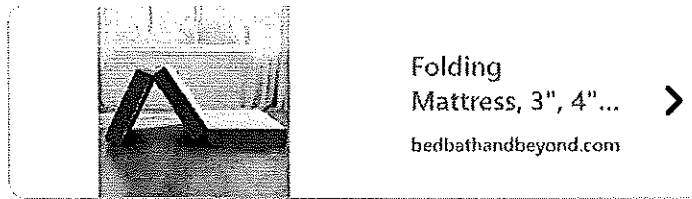
Story by WLTX • 1w • 2 min read



Former Representative RJ May to represent himself in federal court

Former state Rep. Robert John May, of Lexington, appeared before a federal court judge this morning in Columbia for a hearing to determine whether or not May might represent himself during his upcoming trial.

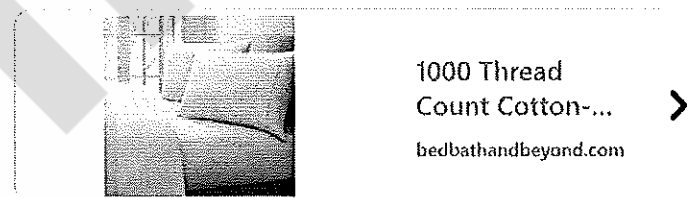
After conducting a Faretta hearing to ensure that May understood the significant risks involved with self-representation, the Honorable Cameron McGowan Currie granted May's motion to proceed pro se (on his own behalf), with current defense counsel to serve as stand-by counsel.



May is facing a 10-count indictment for distributing child sexual abuse material that was handed down in June. Court documents state the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received a cyber-tip in May 2024 from the social messaging app KIK flagging several videos from the username "joebidennn69" as containing child sexual abuse. Investigators traced the account to May's home IP address and mobile device and identified at least 10 videos depicting child sexual abuse that were shared from the account. Allegedly, children in the videos were as young as toddler age.

Following the indictment, House Speaker Murrell Smith suspended May from office. May resigned his seat on August 7. He had represented House District 88 in Lexington County since 2021, having been reelected in 2024 after facing no opposition in the general election.

May faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison with a minimum of five years, a fine of \$250,000, and a term of at least five years of supervised release to follow any term of imprisonment.



Jury selection is scheduled to begin on October 8 with May's trial to begin on October 9.

Before then, there are several court dates set for May to file a motion of suppression, review discovery, proposed stipulations, jury charges, verdict form, and to file any pretrial motions.

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Judge says RJ May can represent himself in federal child porn trial

Sep 4, 2025 12:31 PM EDT by ABC Columbia Staff (<https://www.abccolumbia.com/author/abccolumbiasitestaff/>)

Columbia, S.C. (WOLO)—A former state lawmaker accused of possessing child pornography will serve as his own lawyer. Officials with the US Attorney's office say a judge made the decision to allow RJ May to represent himself in federal court Thursday morning.

According to federal investigators, May faces ten federal charges related to the distribution of more than 200 videos containing child sexual abuse material.

May, a former Republican representative from Lexington County, resigned from office in August. Jury selection in his trial will begin on October 8th.

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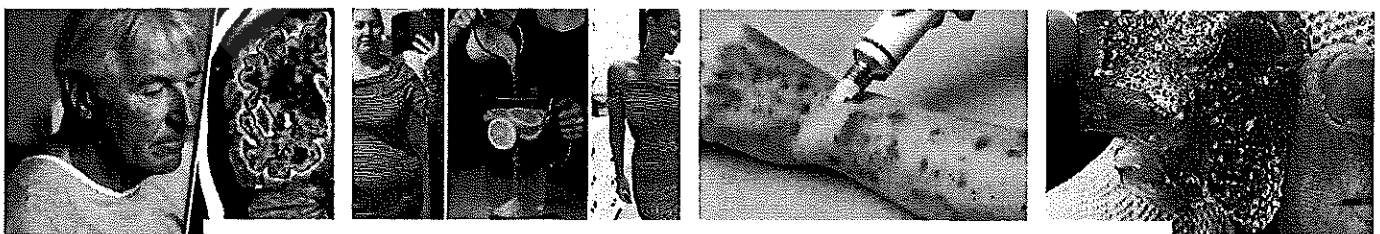
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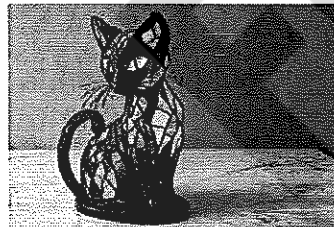
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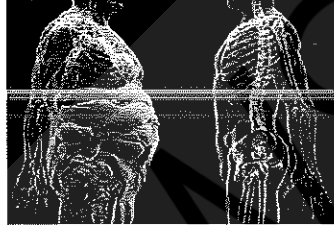


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Who wants to finish RJ May's SC House term? Here's who filed in Lexington County

Story by Joseph Bustos • 1w • 2 min read




Former state Rep. R.J. May, R-Lexington, resigned from his seat in August. Five people filed to complete his term.

Five hopefuls filed by Saturday's deadline to complete former state Rep. RJ May's unfinished term in the Lexington County district.

Four Republicans and one Democrat jumped into the race, ensuring a competitive contest in the Dec. 23 special election. However, because the district is heavily Republican, whoever wins the Oct. 21 GOP primary will be the overwhelming favorite to win the seat.

Feedback

President Donald Trump received 67% of the vote in the district in the November 2024 election.



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May resigned from his seat in August after he was indicted on 10 counts of distributing child sexual abuse material.

The District 88 Republican field to replace May includes Brian Duncan, Lorelei Graye, John Lastinger and Darren E. Rogers Sr.

Duncan, who ran for the seat in 2020, launched a write-campaign in October 2024 against May when questions surrounded the then-state representative after his house was searched by federal law enforcement. More than 1,100 people wrote-in a name in November's District 88 election.

Graye, who founded Leodoran Financial, lost to May in the June 2024 primary.

Lastinger, a pastor at The Edge Church, ran for the seat in 2020, but lost in the primary.

Rogers serves on the Lexington County Mental Health Board.

Joseph "Chuck" Hightower, a retired Army colonel, is the only person who filed for the Democratic nomination and is set to appear on the Dec. 23 ballot.

Early voting ahead of the Oct. 21 primary will be from Oct. 6-17.

If no Republican receives a majority of the votes in the primary, a runoff election will take place Nov. 4, with early voting from Oct. 29-31.

Early voting for the special election will take place Dec. 8-19.

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Jailhouse texts show accused child porn distributor RJ May worries, will fight

By John Monk

Updated August 18, 2025 2:39 PM

FITSKNEWS



Representative R.J. May, R-Lexington, watches as the South Carolina House of Representatives selects Murrell Smith, R-Sumter, as speaker on Tuesday, December 3, 2024. Joshua Boucher jboucher@thestate.com

Jailhouse texts from accused child sex abuser and former SC lawmaker Robert “RJ” May III show a Bible-quoting man with numerous woes — about money, about getting a lawyer, about legal strategy, and about what people think of him.

“I’d never hurt your kids or mine,” May, 38, a married father of two young children, told one unidentified person he texted June 25, a day after he was given a taxpayer-funded lawyer by U.S. Magistrate Judge Shiva Hodges.

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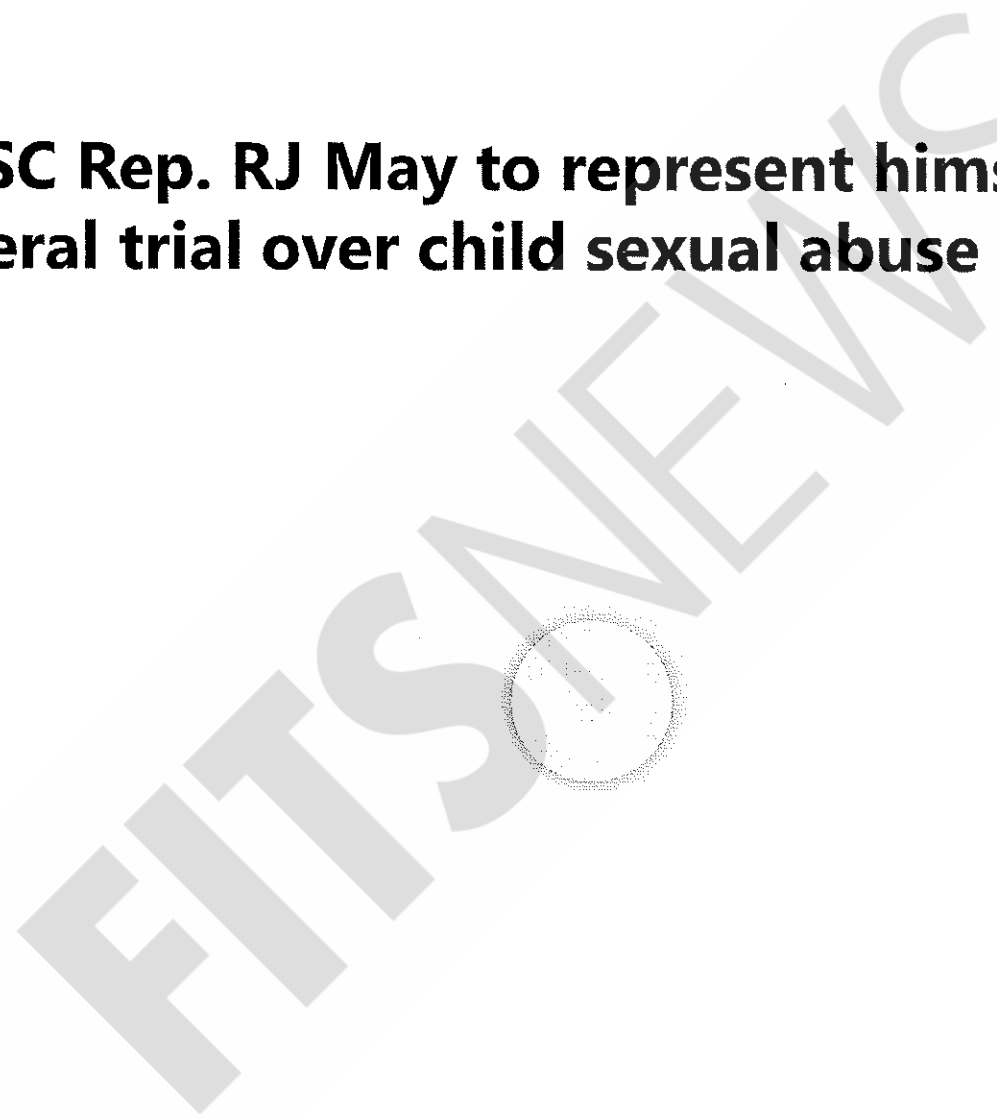
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Ex-SC Rep. RJ May to represent himself in federal trial over child sexual abuse material



A former South Carolina state lawmaker has elected to represent himself in his upcoming federal trial.

By WIS News 10 Staff

Published: Sep. 4, 2025 at 11:10 AM EDT | Updated: Sep. 4, 2025 at 11:13 AM EDT



RJ May appeared in federal court on Thursday for a status hearing, where his request to self-represent was granted. His trial is still scheduled to begin in October.

May, a Republican who represented the Lexington area, was indicted on 10 federal counts of distributing child sexual abuse material. He resigned from the South Carolina House of Representatives on Aug. 7, nearly two months after his arrest and suspension from the chamber.

MORE COVERAGE

SC Rep. RJ May resigns amid federal child sex abuse material case

Oklahoma nurse accused of exchanging child sexual abuse material with SC Rep. RJ May

SC House Ethics Committee opens investigation into state representative

SC Rep. RJ May granted public defender in federal child sex abuse material case

'Horrific': Gov. McMaster comments on allegations against SC Rep. RJ May

SC Rep. RJ May indicted on federal child sex abuse material charges, to remain detained

Allegations against May include sending and receiving over 250 videos containing child sex abuse using the social messaging app Kik under the username "joebidennnn69."

May was informed during Thursday's hearing that he will have standby counsel with his current attorneys, only being able to sit in the row behind him for jury selection and the trial. His request for hybrid counsel, meaning the attorneys will be allowed to sit at the table beside him, was denied.

A judge also noted that any pretrial filings would need to be completed by May from his jail cell.

May's defense previously asked the court not to allow an August 2024 search warrant at his home to be presented as evidence. A judge will hear that motion at a pretrial conference scheduled for Sept. 24.

The South Carolina House Ethics Committee has also since launched an investigation into May for

May's charges carry a maximum 20-year prison sentence, with a minimum of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. He is being held at the Edgefield County Detention Center.

BACKGROUND ON ALLEGATIONS

An unsealed memo states Kik compiled data from May's alleged account in July 2024, with content containing 265 videos depicting child sexual abuse material. The data also showed May's account allegedly sent or received nearly 1,150 messages with other Kik users, with some discussing trading child sexual abuse material.

Kik's data also included IP addresses from each message that was sent, with May's account being used at his home's Wi-Fi network 958 times.

"Agents confirmed during surveillance of the residence, and again during the search of the residence, that the Wi-Fi at the May residence was password protected," an indictment read in part. "Thus, for the CSAM activity on Kik to have been conducted by someone other than May, that person would have had to know the Wi-Fi password."

Activity on the account was also accessed via a virtual private network as well as a Verizon Wireless account, per documents.

Documents also state that a forensic analysis of May's phone showed he deleted Kik as well as other apps Telegram, Mega and Loki Messenger, within seconds of each other in April 2024. It also showed May allegedly used Kik to discuss the use of Telegram and Messenger, which prosecutors noted "both of which are applications that have frequently been used by individuals engaged in CSAM activity due to their encryption and foreign ownership."

The memo states May's Mega account was registered to the name "Eric Rentling," which was an alias he allegedly used to create a Facebook account in that name. Investigators found the photo associated with the Facebook account "appears to be a picture of the back of May's head."

Investigators also found the Eric Rentling account had conversations in Spanish with women from Colombia that "consisted largely of arranging 'meet up' dates, time, price negotiations, and rules regarding the videoing of sexual encounters, all of which are indicative of sex work." May would also

The memo further states May's activity on Kik revealed "he has a sexual interest in children the same age as his own children" and that he has "a sexual interest in incest" between young children and their parents.

"May engaged in this behavior on his cell phone and from his own home on multiple occasions, presumably without his wife's knowledge," the memo reads. "If he can hide this criminal activity from the person he shares a bedroom with, then he can easily hide it from any court enforcement mechanism. Furthermore, there is evidence that he has recently traveled to South America to engage in commercial sex, again presumably without his wife's knowledge that he ever even left the country. Thus, he is very likely to be able to evade detection by court enforcement of release conditions."

The court filing was a request from the U.S. Attorney's Office, asking for more time with the evidence investigators seized, which was permitted. In it, the federal government said it had expected to criminally indict May by March of this year, though it was unclear at that time what charges were expected to be brought against him or the scope and nature of the investigation.

This is a developing story. Stay with WIS News 10 for updates.

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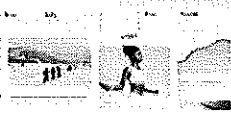
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Ex-SC Rep. RJ May files handwritten motion to suppress evidence ahead of child sex abuse material trial

Story by Marley Bassett • 6d • 1 min read



South Carolina Rep. RJ May, R-West Columbia, speaks in favor of an education voucher bill on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, in Columbia, S.C. (AP Photo/Jeffrey Collins) (AP Photo/Jeffrey Collins)
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COLUMBIA, S.C. (WIS) - Former South Carolina state Rep. RJ May filed a handwritten motion on Wednesday, the first since he was granted a request to represent himself in his federal trial.

May, who faces a 10-count indictment related to child sexual abuse material, filed a request to "suppress items seized during a search of

his home on Aug. 5, 2024."



During the seizure, 35 devices were stolen by Homeland Security agents, including multiple hard drives and cellphones, a tablet and a laptop, among other electronics.

According to his request, May said that there was no evidence of child sexual abuse material found on any of the devices seized, which Homeland Security agent Brittany Lorenzen testified to during his June 12 detention hearing.

May is also requesting a hearing from the court, alleging that there was "government misconduct in procuring the issuance of a search warrant." He is also asking that the court require Lorenzen to testify if he is granted the hearing.

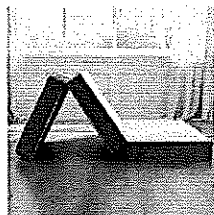
A pretrial conference for May is scheduled for later this month, with his trial slated to begin in October.

The handwritten portion of May's filing can be read below:

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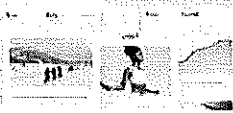
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Status hearing scheduled for former South Carolina GOP lawmaker accused in child sex abuse material investigation

Story by Tim Renaud • 1w • 2 min read



Status hearing scheduled for former South Carolina GOP lawmaker accused in child sex abuse material investigation

COLUMBIA, S.C. (WCBD) – Former South Carolina State Representative RJ May is expected to appear in a Columbia courtroom on Friday morning.

The disgraced Republican lawmaker resigned from the State House in August after he was indicted in June on 10 federal counts related to child sexual abuse material.



Prosecutors said the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received a cyber tip that flagged several videos shared from an account named "joebidennn69," which were traced to May.

May, 38, was taken into custody on June 11 in Lexington County following a more than one-year-long investigation into alleged child sexual exploitation crimes.

A motion filed by federal prosecutors states that May used Kik to participate in "multiple group chats dedicated to the trading of child pornography," distributing approximately 220 different videos about 479 times over five days in early April, including instances where the same video was shared multiple times.

May had represented District 88 in the South Carolina House since 2021 and had previously served as vice chair of the hard-line conservative South Carolina Freedom Caucus.

PREVIOUS: Suspended state Rep. RJ May resigns after indictment in federal sex crimes case

His bond was denied in June, and he remains behind bars. Thursday's hearing is a status of counsel hearing requested by May and his defense team to discuss how to move forward with the case.

The hearing is scheduled for 10 a.m. at the U.S. District Courthouse in Columbia. His trial for the child sex abuse material charges is set to begin with jury selection on October 8.

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https://www.postandcourier.com/politics/rj-may-trial-child-pornography-charges/article_c8bo9975-4475-4cd1-94f7-7386608c9e5a.html

Former SC state Rep. RJ May to represent himself in trial on child pornography charges

BY ANNA WILDER AWILDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

SEP 4, 2025



S.C. state Rep. R.J. May, R-West Columbia, speaks on the House floor. May is currently in jail facing a federal indictment on 10 counts of distributing child sex abuse material and will represent himself during a federal court trial.

FILE/JEFFREY COLLINS/AP

COLUMBIA — Former state Rep. RJ May will act as his own lawyer in his federal court trial where he faces 10 counts of distributing child sex abuse material.

May made the decision to represent himself during a status hearing Sept. 4. He had been with his assigned federal public defender, Jenny Smith, and co-counsel, Jeremy Thompson, when he made his decision to cut them loose.

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Former South Carolina lawmaker R.J. May to represent himself in federal court

Story by Caroline Yaffa • 1w • 1 min read



Former South Carolina lawmaker R.J. May to represent himself in federal court


COLUMBIA, S.C. (WSPA) – Former state Representative Robert John (R.J.) May III was permitted by a federal judge on Thursday to represent himself in trial in federal court next month.

May was federally indicted on 10 counts of child sexual abuse material. Investigators said they connected him to an account sharing child sexual abuse material through an app called "Kik."



The app flagged several videos from an account called "Joe Biden69." Agents said they tracked that activity to May's home internet and cell phone.

May resigned last month from the House of Representatives and said the decision "is in the best interest of his family and constituents."



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RJ May Resignation LetterDownload

He was assigned Federal Public Defender Jenny Smith and Co-Counsel Jeremy Thompson, but as of Thursday, he will be solo.

As of now, May's trial is scheduled to begin with jury selection on October 8.

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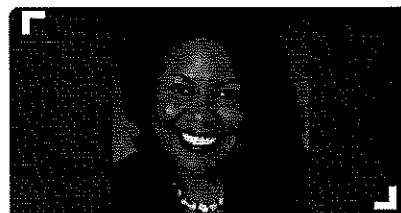


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Suspended state Rep. RJ May resigns after indictment in federal sex crimes case

Sophie Brams

Mon, August 11, 2025 at 1:38 PM EDT

3 min read



3



COLUMBIA, S.C. (WCBD) – A Republican state lawmaker accused of using a social messaging app to distribute child sexual abuse material has resigned from the South Carolina House.

RJ May, who was indicted on 10 counts by a federal grand jury in June, informed House Speaker Murrell Smith of his decision in an Aug. 7 letter.

"I have decided that it is in the best interest of my family and constituents to resign immediately from the South Carolina House of Representatives," he wrote.

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May was taken into custody on June 11 following a more than one-year-long investigation into alleged child sexual exploitation crimes. He remains behind bars in Lexington County.

The speaker's office confirmed the day after May's arrest that he was suspended without pay.

The West Columbia lawmaker has represented District 88 since 2021 and helped form the hardline conservative South Carolina Freedom Caucus. He also founded Ivory Tusk Consulting, a political consulting and public relations firm specializing in services for Republicans.

The Freedom Caucus called May's resignation "long overdue" in a statement released Monday afternoon.

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"While we welcome this resignation, we strongly believe that the SC House should have acted to expel RJ May after he was indicted for such heinous crimes," the statement continued. "Our hearts are with his victims and innocent family and we pray for swift justice as this ugly chapter in the South Carolina House of Representatives comes to a close."

The process to remove May from the chamber was set in motion in mid-June when House Majority Leader Davey Hiott (R-Pickens) filed a complaint with the House Ethics Committee to investigate "not only Mr. May, but his business dealings with other members of the State House of Representatives."

In a Monday statement, Hiott called for the ethics committee to continue with its investigation.

"I hope the House Ethics Committee will follow its process through to conclusion, regardless of his resignation," the statement read, in part.

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Formally expelling him would have required a two-thirds vote once the ethics investigation had concluded.

May's resignation sets up the potential for a special election to fill the District 88 seat this winter, according to the South Carolina Election Commission.

A spokesperson said the commission had not yet received official notice from May or the House regarding a vacancy, but outlined a projected timeline for the special election:

- Filing period: August 29- September 6
- Primary election: October 21
- Runoff, if needed: November 4
- Special election: December 23

The allegations

Prosecutors said the investigation began in April 2024 after the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received a cyber-tip from the social messaging app Kik, which had flagged several videos depicting child sexual abuse shared from the user "joebidennnn69."

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At least 10 videos were shared from the account, which was later traced to May's West Columbia home IP address and mobile device.

Agents with Homeland Security Investigations seized nearly three dozen electronic devices belonging to May last August as part of the ongoing criminal

investigation, according to a federal court filing. Those included laptops, cell phones, hard drives, and other devices.

A motion filed by federal prosecutors states that May used Kik to participate in “multiple group chats dedicated to the trading of child pornography,” distributing approximately 220 different videos about 479 times over five days in early April, including instances where the same video was shared multiple times.

The document contains graphic details about the contents of the videos and states that May’s activity on the app “reveals he has sexual interest in children the same age as his own [two] children” and a “sexual interest in incest” between parents and children.

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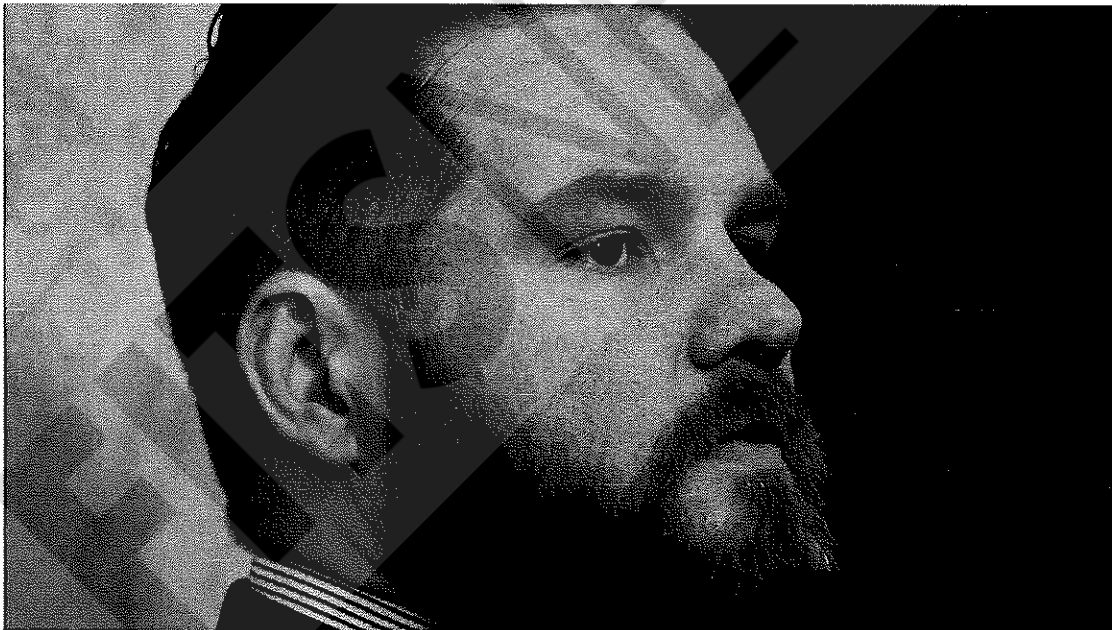
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SOUTH CAROLINA

Suspended state Rep. RJ May allegedly sent child porn to Oklahoma nurse, Feds say

By Joseph Bustos

August 6, 2025 10:28 AM



Representative R.J. May, R-Lexington, watches as the South Carolina House of Representatives speaker on Tuesday, December 3, 2024. Joshua Boucher jboucher@thestate.com



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Christian Soto, of Oklahoma City, who was born in 1990, is charged with receiving child pornography, possession of child porn and a prohibited person in possession of ammunition.

TOP VIDEOS

According to federal court filings, May and Soto communicated on the social media app Kik to exchange videos. May used his alleged username JoeBidennnn69 to share videos with Soto, who had the username “randomcouplehere” on April 3, 2024, a day when the state House of Representatives was on furlough, the court records show.

The two sent messages to each other asking for specific types of sexual abuse of children, court documents say. Four of the videos ranged from 21 seconds to 1 minute and 36 seconds.






May, a driving force behind the creation of the South Carolina House Freedom Caucus and who has been charged with 10 counts of distributing child sexual abuse materials, is being held without bond at the Edgefield County jail pending trial.

An ethics complaint also has been filed against the Lexington County Republican as part of a process to potentially remove him from office.

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Joseph Bustos *The State*    803-771-8450

Joseph Bustos is a state government and politics reporter at The State. He's a Northwestern University graduate and previously worked in Illinois covering government and politics. He has won reporting awards in both Illinois and Missouri. He moved to South Carolina in November 2019 and won the Jim Davenport Award for Excellence in Government Reporting for his work in 2022. Support my work with a digital subscription

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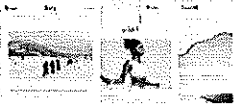
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S.C. ex-lawmaker to represent himself in federal child porn trial

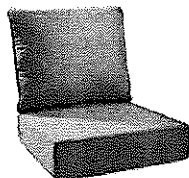
Story by Staff • 1w • 2 min read



Federal filing: Criminal indictment expected against Lexington County lawmaker, 35 devices seized
© wis-tv

COLUMBIA, S.C. - A former South Carolina state lawmaker has elected to represent himself in his upcoming federal trial.

RJ May appeared in federal court on Thursday for a status hearing, where his request to self-represent was granted. His trial is still scheduled to begin in October.



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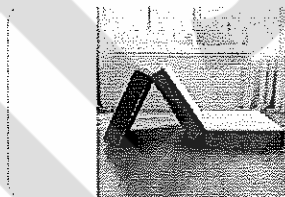
May, a Republican who represented the Lexington area, was indicted on 10 federal counts of distributing child sexual abuse material. He resigned from the South Carolina House of Representatives on Aug. 7, nearly two months after his arrest and suspension from the chamber.

Allegations against May include sending and receiving over 250 videos containing child sex abuse using the social messaging app Kik under the username "joebidennnn69."

May was informed during Thursday's hearing that he will have standby counsel with his current attorneys, only being able to sit in the row behind him for jury selection and the trial. His request for hybrid counsel, meaning the attorneys will be allowed to sit at the table beside him, was denied.

A judge also noted that any pretrial filings would need to be completed by May from his jail cell.

May's defense previously asked the court not to allow an August 2024 search warrant at his home to be presented as evidence. A judge will hear that motion at a pretrial conference scheduled for Sept. 24.



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The South Carolina House Ethics Committee has also since launched an investigation into May for potential misuse of office and alleged conduct unbecoming of a member.

May's charges carry a maximum 20-year prison sentence, with a minimum of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. He is being held at the Edgefield County Detention Center.

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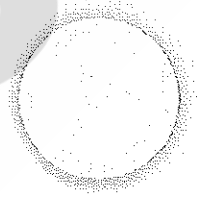
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SC Rep. RJ May resigns amid federal child sex abuse material case

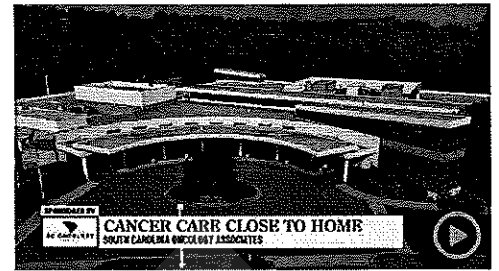
Updated: Aug. 11, 2025 at 12:00 PM EDT



Suspended South Carolina state Rep. RJ May has resigned nearly two months after receiving a federal indictment related to child sexual abuse material.

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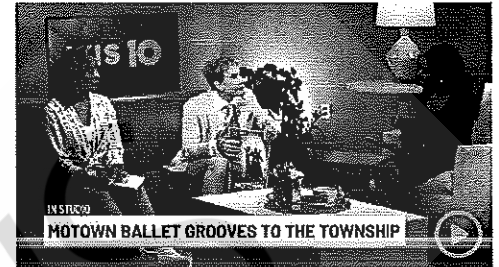
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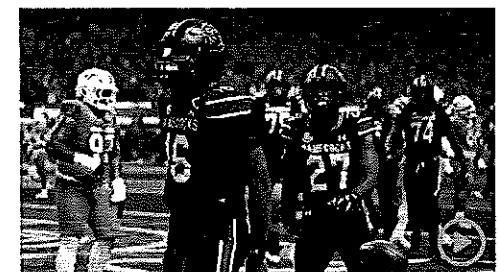
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Shane Beamer addresses Gamecocks' QB situation as Sellers' status remains uncertain

Updated: 18 hours ago

South Carolina head coach Shane Beamer addressed the team's quarterback situation as it's unclear if LaNorris Sellers will play Saturday vs. Missouri.



WYRD-AM Radio
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May resigns from Statehouse amid child sex crime charges

Story by Rob Jones • 1mo • 1 min read

A State Representative has resigned amid allegations of child sex crimes. Lexington Republican RJ May has officially resigned two months after being arrested for distributing child sex abuse material.

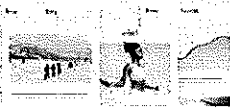
May was suspended from his duties after the State House Ethics Committee opened an investigation following the arrest. The resignation comes a week after an Oklahoma man was indicted on federal charges for allegedly exchanging child sex abuse material with May.

The charges May is facing carry a max sentence of 20 years, he's due back in court later this month.

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USA TODAY

South Carolina lawmaker resigns after arrest on child sex abuse material charges

Story by Fernando Cervantes Jr., USA TODAY • 1 mo • 2 min read



Headshot of RJ May who resigned from the South Carolina House of Representatives.
© Courtesy of the South Carolina House of Representatives

A state lawmaker in South Carolina resigned from his seat months after being arrested for alleged distribution of child sexual abuse material, the state's House speaker announced on Aug. 11.

RJ May, a 38-year-old Republican state representative and former South Carolina House Freedom Caucus strategist, was accused of using the screen name "joebidennn69" on the social media network Kik to exchange 220 different files of toddlers and young children.

"I have decided that it is in the best interest of my family and constituents to resign immediately from the South Carolina House of Representatives," reads a resignation letter sent from May to the state's House Speaker Murrell Smith and obtained by local media outlets, including the Post and Courier and South Carolina Daily Gazette.

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In a statement, the South Carolina House Freedom Caucus, which May helped found, said the resignation is "long overdue."

"The people of District 88 deserve true and honorable representation," the statement said.

According to court records obtained by USA TODAY, May exchanged the explicit files across five days in spring 2024. The records say the files were uploaded and downloaded on May's home Wi-Fi network and on his cellphone.

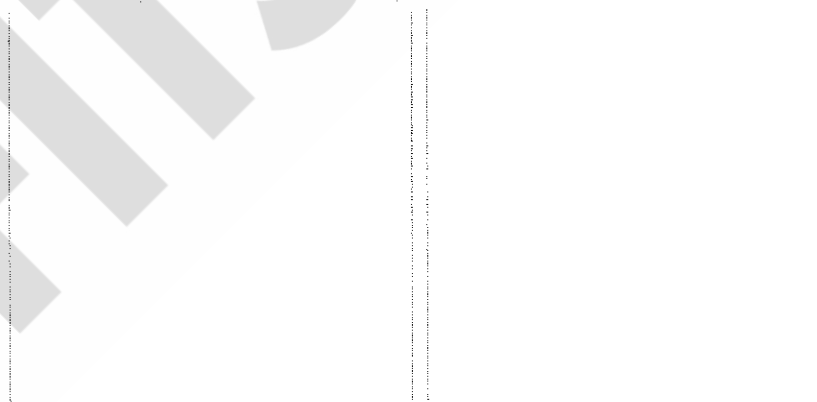
In a June press release from the U.S. Attorney's Office, officials said May faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison, a fine of \$250,000 and five years of probation. May is being held at the Edgefield County jail, awaiting the start of his trial.

May's legal representation did not immediately respond to USA TODAY's request for comment on Aug. 12.

Fernando Cervantes Jr. is a trending news reporter for USA TODAY. Reach him at fernando.cervantes@gannett.com and follow him on X @fern_cerv_.

This article originally appeared on USA TODAY: South Carolina lawmaker resigns after arrest on child sex abuse material charges

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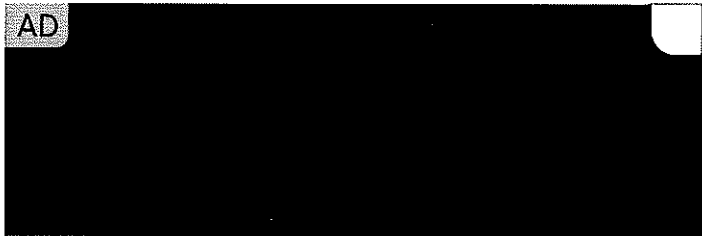
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SOUTH CAROLINA

Suspended state Rep. RJ May allegedly sent child porn to Oklahoma nurse, Feds say

By Joseph Bustos

August 6, 2025 10:28 AM  Gift Article



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Representative R.J. May, R-Lexington, watches as the South Carolina House of Representatives selects Murrell Smith, R-Sumter, as speaker on Tuesday, December 3, 2024. Joshua Boucher jboucher@thestate.com



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Suspended state Rep. RJ May shared videos of child sexual abuse material with a nurse in Oklahoma who is now facing his own federal charges, according to court documents.

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Christian Soto, of Oklahoma City, who was 1
child pornography, possession of child porr
possession of ammunition.

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According to federal court filings, May and Soto communicated on the social media app Kik to exchange videos. May used his alleged username JoeBidennnn69 to share videos with Soto, who had the username “randomcouplehere” on April 3, 2024, a day when the state House of Representatives was on furlough, the court records show.

The two sent messages to each other asking for specific types of graphic videos sexual abuse of children, court documents say. Four of the videos range in length from 21 seconds to 1 minute and 36 seconds.

“Joebidennnn69” sent more than 50 files to “randomcouplehere” during their April 3, 2024 conversation, court documents say.

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The app Kik initially flagged the videos as c
agents were able to trace the user name to
Soto is being held by U.S. Marshals pending

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An ethics complaint also has been filed against the Lexington County Republican as part of a process to potentially remove him from office.

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Joseph Bustos *The State*    803-771-8450

Joseph Bustos is a state government and politics reporter at The State. He's a Northwestern University graduate and previously worked in Illinois covering government and politics. He has won reporting awards in both Illinois and Missouri. He moved to South Carolina in November 2019 and won the Jim Davenport Award for Excellence in Government Reporting for his work in 2022. Support my work with a digital subscription

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AP

South Carolina lawmaker awaiting trial on child sex abuse material charges resigns from office

JEFFREY COLLINS

Mon, August 11, 2025 at 1:58 PM EDT

2 min read



349



FILE - South Carolina Rep. RJ May, R-West Columbia, walks down the aisle of the House, Tuesday, March 14, 2023, in Columbia, S.C. (AP Photo/Jeffrey Collins, File)

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A South Carolina Republican lawmaker in jail awaiting trial on charges he distributed sexual abuse material involving children has resigned his seat in the state House.

RJ May's resignation letter was dated Thursday but didn't arrive at the offices of House leadership until Monday morning.

May wrote that "it is in the best interests of my family and constituents to resign immediately." It does not mention the 10 charges he faces or the more than a decade in prison that prosecutors have suggested May could face if convicted.

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The return address on the letter was May's Lexington post office box. He is currently being held at the Edgefield County jail without bond as he awaits trial as soon as next month.

May's federal public defender did not respond to an email Monday.

The three-term Republican is accused of using the screen name "joebidennnn69" to exchange 220 different files of toddlers and young children involved in sex acts on the Kik social media network for about five days in spring 2024, according to court documents that graphically detailed the videos.

The files were uploaded and downloaded using May's home Wi-Fi network and his cellphone, prosecutors said. Some were hidden by the use of a private network but others were directly linked to his internet addresses.

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At his arraignment, May's lawyer suggested someone could have used the Wi-Fi password that was shown on a board behind a photo May's wife may have posted online.

Each of the 10 charges carries a five-to-20-year prison sentence upon conviction.

Calls for May's resignation were nearly unanimous in the South Carolina House, including members who were most closely aligned with May as he helped found the Freedom Caucus of the chamber's most conservative members. The House

Ethics Committee last month started an investigation that appeared to be the first step in trying to kick May out of the House.

May worked as a political consultant. He was elected in 2020 and in his five years in the House upset many mainstream Republicans as he continued to run campaigns for people looking to knock out incumbents in GOP primaries.

The timing of May's resignation should allow his replacement to be chosen in a special election before the 2026 General Assembly session starts in January.

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South Carolina DAILY GAZETTE

SC legislator accused of distributing videos of child sexual abuse resigns House seat

Skylar Laird

Mon, August 11, 2025 at 1:54 PM EDT

4 min read



9



Rep. RJ May, R-West Columbia, pictured Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024, resigned his House seat following charges of distributing child sexual abuse material. (Photo

by Mary Ann Chastain/Special to the SC Daily Gazette)

COLUMBIA — Rep. RJ May has resigned his House seat two months after his arrest on charges of distributing child sexual abuse material, according to a letter the House Speaker's Office received Monday.

The West Columbia Republican, who remains in jail without bond, has been suspended from the House without pay since his June arrest, as per state law for any public official indicted on a felony. He was also the subject of a House Ethics Commission investigation, which would have been the first step toward expelling him from the House.

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"I have decided that it is in the best interest of my family and constituents to resign immediately from the South Carolina House of Representatives," May wrote in his letter, dated Thursday. "Please accept this letter as my formal resignation from the South Carolina House of Representatives."

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"It has been an honor to serve the people of District 88," the three-sentence letter concluded.

As required by law, the election for May's seat is expected to take place Dec. 23, three weeks before the 2026 legislative session begins. Filing would open Aug. 29, with a primary election taking place Oct. 21, according to the State Election Commission.

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The office of House Speaker Murrell Smith must still officially set the dates.

House Majority Leader Davey Hiott, R-Pickens, said he's unsure whether the ethics complaint he had filed will end with May's resignation, but he hopes it will expand to include May's consulting work.

As owner of Ivory Tusk Consulting, May ran campaigns for GOP candidates who aligned with his own hardline conservatism. Payments from some of those clients, including members of the Freedom Caucus, continued until at least this spring, according to public campaign disclosures.

"I hope members of the House Freedom Caucus don't think this will end this investigation," Hiott said in a statement.

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Rep. Jordan Pace, a Goose Creek Republican and Freedom Caucus chairman, said he welcomed May's resignation and had hoped the House would have already expelled him. May was a founding member of the ultra-conservative Freedom Caucus that's publicly battled with the chamber's majority GOP caucus and acted as its de facto spokesman until the investigation into him became public last summer.

"Our hearts are with his victims and his innocent family, and we pray for swift justice as this ugly chapter in the South Carolina House of Representatives comes to a close," the Freedom Caucus said in a statement.

Oklahoma man charged with receiving child sexual abuse material from Rep. RJ May

The investigation into May began in April 2024, when social messaging app Kik notified a federal nonprofit that videos involving child sexual abuse had been sent from an account called "joebiden69."

Federal investigators tracked the account, which had saved 220 different videos and images depicting child sexual abuse, to May's house and cellphone, prosecutors said during a June detention hearing.

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An attorney for May argued that someone had hacked into his accounts and targeted the 38-year-old father of two for political reasons.

During the investigation, May continued showing up to session every day, though he stayed quiet instead of participating in debates. He continued to vote alongside the Freedom Caucus, though he hadn't been a member since news broke that investigators had seized his computers in August.

May is scheduled to appear in federal court Aug. 20 for a pre-trial hearing. Jury selection for his trial is scheduled to begin Sept. 10, according to court filings. But his attorney asked Monday for a delay.

May was re-elected last year without opposition.

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Brian Duncan, a Republican who launched a write-in campaign last October — after early voting had already begun — will run to fill the seat, he said in a statement Monday. It's unclear how many votes Duncan received on November ballots, since votes for candidates written in aren't reported by name on the state Election Commission's online results.

However, there were 1,104 write-in votes for the Lexington County seat, compared to 13,020 cast for May.

Duncan, who owns a security company called Security Pro, ran for the same seat during the 2020 primary election, placing fourth among five candidates.

"Today's resignation is long overdue," Duncan said in a statement. "While this has been a difficult chapter for our community, it is my hope that this decision marks the beginning of a new era of accountability and leadership. My thoughts are also with the victims in this case and their families, who have endured unimaginable harm."

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Sicko arrested for trading child porn with ousted Republican South Carolina Rep. Robert 'RJ' May

NEWYORKPOST

CAITLIN MCCORMACK

August 6, 2025



A man in Oklahoma was arrested in connection with a child pornography probe involving a former South Carolina representative.

An Oklahoma man was arrested for allegedly swapping child pornography with disgraced South Carolina state Rep. Robert "RJ" May over a month after the former lawmaker was booked.

Christian Soto, who has a lengthy criminal record including threatening to kill his ex-girlfriend, was arrested in connection with the FBI's probe into May's online exchanges of more than 220 graphic files of child pornography.



Christian Soto was arrested in connection with a child pornography probe involving former South Carolina state Rep. Robert "RJ" May.

Now, Soto faces additional federal charges including receipt of child pornography, possession of child pornography, and prohibited possession of ammunition.

May (R-Lexington), a 38-year-old father of two, was arrested at his home in June after authorities found he used the online handle "joebidennnn69" to trade explicit content of young children and toddlers engaging in sex acts over five days last spring.



May was arrested in June. AP

The three-term representative allegedly requested content of "bad moms" from Soto, who operated under the more stereotypical degenerate handle "randomcouplehere," according to court documents obtained by KOCO.

The duo swapped files over Kik, with May offering Soto more than 50 files of graphic sexual abuse material involving pubescent children, according to the documents.

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When Soto was apprehended, authorities also recovered dozens of digital items from his home and vehicle containing even more child sexual abuse material.

Among the content seized from May's house when he was arrested was a file containing several videos of himself on trips to Colombia engaging in sex with three women who appeared to be underage and were paid, a Department of Homeland Security official testified.



The two allegedly swapped pornography over Kik. AP

It's unclear how many other people May might have exchanged pornography with.

During his time in the state House of Representatives, May frequently led crusades against LGBTQ+ policies while claiming the governing body had "an obligation to ensure that our children have no harm done to them."



May messaged under the username "joebidennnn69." AP

Each of the 10 charges May faces carries a five- to 20-year prison sentence.

May was ordered to remain in custody until his trial and denied bail — as his two young children are close in age to the victims exploited in the pornography.

The lengthy investigation started after Kik flagged suspicious activity on its platform to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in April 2024.

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Ex-SC Rep. RJ May seeks delay in federal trial on child sex abuse material charges

Published: Aug. 12, 2025 at 11:31 PM EDT



A former South Carolina state representative is now looking to delay his trial on charges linked to child sex abuse material.



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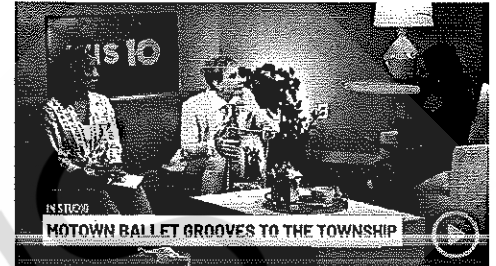
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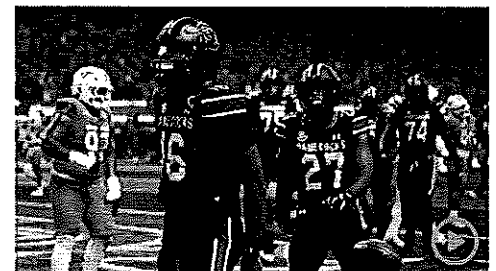
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Shane Beamer addresses Gamecocks' QB situation as Sellers' status remains uncertain

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South Carolina head coach Shane Beamer addressed the team's quarterback situation as it's unclear if LaNorris Sellers will play Saturday vs. Missouri.





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SC Rep. requests meeting of General Assembly to consider expulsion of Rep RJ May

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A state lawmaker is requesting the General Assembly to consider expelling another lawmaker now facing federal charges.



COLUMBIA, S.C. (FOX Carolina) - A representative with the South Carolina House of Representatives sent a letter requesting that the General Assembly reconvene to consider the expulsion of a state lawmaker from Lexington County.

Our sister station WIS reported that Representative R.J. May from Lexington County was arrested and charged with 10 counts of distributing child sexual abuse material.

WIS said May was also suspended from his role in the South Carolina House of Representatives as a result of a letter by South Carolina House Speaker Murrell Smith.

Representative Jordan S. Pace from Berkley County sent a letter to the Speaker of the House for the SC House of Representatives and the President of the South Carolina Senate on Monday to request a reconvening of the General Assembly on or before Aug. 27.

This session would only require a two-thirds majority from the House to expel May, the letter said.

The letter said May has not resigned from his position, and Pace is concerned the constituents of May's district in Lexington County will be without representation during the regular session in January, due to the time needed to complete a special election.

The full letter is available here:

[Sine Die Reconvene Request](#) by [tyler.scott](#) on Scribd

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Jordan S. Pace
District No. 117 – Berkeley County
P. O. Box 1814
Goose Creek, SC 29445

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House of Representatives

State of South Carolina

The Honorable Murrell Smith
Speaker, South Carolina House of Representatives
The Honorable Thomas Alexander
President, South Carolina Senate

July 28, 2025

Dear Mr. Speaker and Mr. President:

I write today to formally request that the General Assembly be reconvened on or before August 2nd amend the Sine Die resolution to include consideration of the immediate expulsion of RJ May from Carolina House of Representatives.

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Columbia, SC 29201

Tel. (803) 212-6726
RJMay@schouse.gov

Committee:
Agriculture, Natural Resources
and Environmental Affairs

House of Representatives
State of South Carolina

August 7, 2025

The Hon. G. Murrell Smith, Jr.
Speaker of the House of Representatives
South Carolina House of Representatives
506 Blatt Building
Columbia, SC 29201

*Received
August 11, 2025
John Fitz*

Dear Mr. Speaker,

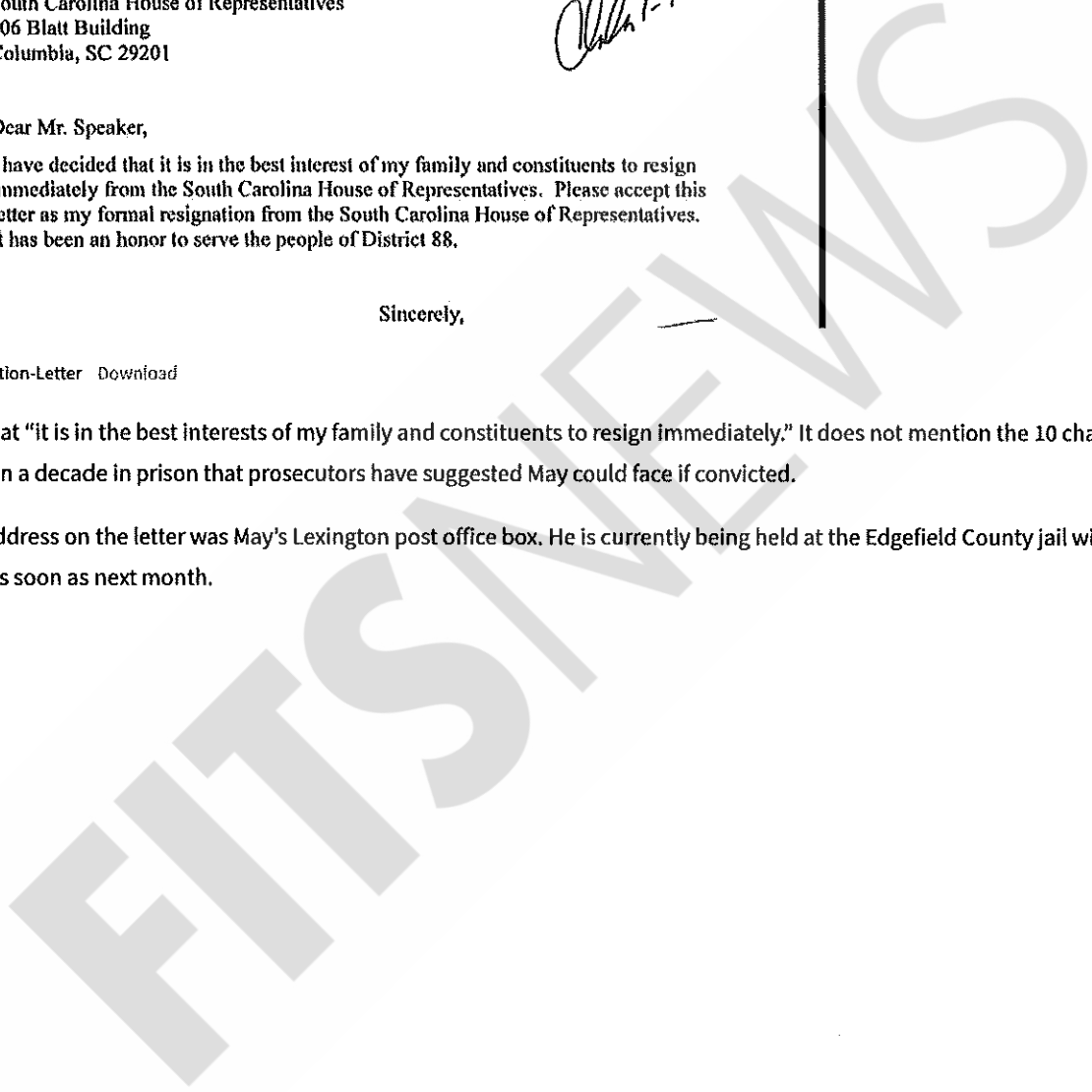
I have decided that it is in the best interest of my family and constituents to resign immediately from the South Carolina House of Representatives. Please accept this letter as my formal resignation from the South Carolina House of Representatives. It has been an honor to serve the people of District 88.

Sincerely,

RJ-May-Resignation-Letter Download

May wrote that "it is in the best interests of my family and constituents to resign immediately." It does not mention the 10 charges he faces or the more than a decade in prison that prosecutors have suggested May could face if convicted.

The return address on the letter was May's Lexington post office box. He is currently being held at the Edgefield County jail without bond as he awaits trial as soon as next month.



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NEWS

South Carolina lawmaker awaiting trial on child sex abuse material charges resigns from office

by: The Associated Press, [Caroline Yaffa](#)
Posted: Aug 11, 2025 / 02:46 PM EDT
Updated: Aug 11, 2025 / 07:45 PM EDT

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COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A South Carolina Republican lawmaker in jail awaiting trial on charges he distributed sexual abuse material involving children has resigned his seat in the state House.

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Accept

May's federal public defender did not respond to an email Monday.

The three-term Republican is accused of using the screen name "joebidennn69" to exchange 220 different files of toddlers and young children involved in sex acts on the Kik social media network for about five days in spring 2024, according to court documents that graphically detailed the videos.

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The files were uploaded and downloaded using May's home Wi-Fi network and his cellphone, prosecutors said. Some were hidden by the use of a private network but others were directly linked to his internet addresses.

At his arraignment, May's lawyer suggested someone could have used the Wi-Fi password that was shown on a board behind a photo May's wife may have posted online.

Each of the 10 charges carries a five-to-20-year prison sentence upon conviction.

Calls for May's resignation were nearly unanimous in the South Carolina House, including members who were most closely aligned with May as he helped found the Freedom Caucus of the chamber's most conservative members.

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The Freedom Caucus released a statement Monday.

Freedom-Caucus-responds-to-May-resignation [Download](#)

The South Carolina House Republican Caucus Majority Leader Davey Hiott said may's resignation is a year overdue.

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“Now that he has finally resigned, the House Freedom Caucus has changed their tune. For months they’ve defended him, paid him tens of thousands of dollars, and even called him an ‘upstanding member.’ I hope the House Ethics Committee, having already initiated its inquiry, will follow its process through to conclusion, regardless of his resignation.”

The House Ethics Committee last month started an investigation that appeared to be the first step in trying to kick May out of the House.

May worked as a political consultant. He was elected in 2020 and in his five years in the House upset many mainstream Republicans as he continued to run campaigns for people looking to knock out incumbents in GOP primaries.

The South Carolina Election Commission said the timing of May’s resignation should allow his replacement to be chosen in a special election before the 2026 General Assembly session starts in January.

- Date of vacancy: 8/11/2025
- Filing opens (3rd Friday after vacancy): 8/29/2025
- Filing closes (8 days later): 9/6/2025
- Primary (11th Tuesday after vacancy): 10/21/2025
 - EV period: 10/6 – 10/17 (M–F, closed holidays)
- Runoff (13th Tuesday after vacancy): 11/4/2025
 - EV period: 10/29 – 10/31
- Special Election (20th Tuesday after vacancy): 12/23/2025
 - EV period: 12/8 – 12/19 (M–F, closed holidays)

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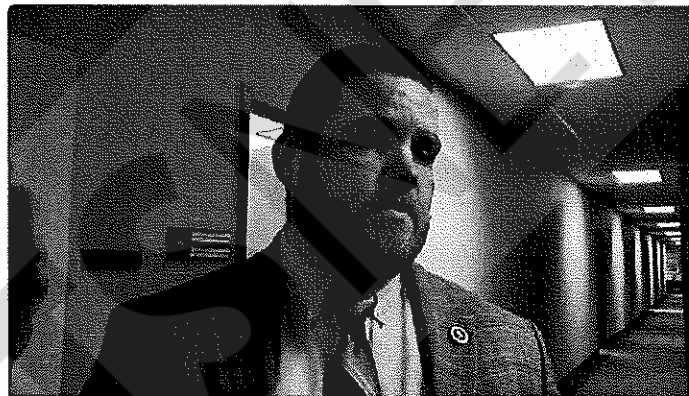
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Connect to the Capitol Extra: RJ May to defend himself against federal child porn charges

Story by Brian Mcconchie • 1w • 1 min read



Connect to the Capitol Extra: RJ May to defend himself against federal child porn charges

COLUMBIA, S.C. (WACH) - During a hearing in federal court this week, it was determined that former state lawmaker RJ May will represent himself in court as he faces ten federal child porn charges.

May is expected to go on trial in October.

Earlier this year, a federal grand jury in Greenville returned a 10-count indictment against May. He was arrested in early June.

RELATED | SC Rep. RJ May accused of distributing child sexual abuse material

RJ May to Represent Himself in Federal Court



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According to court records, in April 2024, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received a tip from the messaging app Kik.

The app had flagged several videos shared by the user "joebidennn69" for containing child sexual abuse.



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Officials say investigators traced the account to the home IP address and phone of May and found at least 10 child sexual abuse videos shared from that account.

May faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison with a minimum of five years, a fine of \$250,000, and at least five years of supervised release after.

May has since resigned from his seat in the S.C. House.

RELATED | Connect to the Capitol: Rep. May arrested on child porn charges, funding fight in Columbia

RELATED | SC Freedom Caucus releases statement following resignation of RJ May

An ethics panel has also called for an investigation into May's dealings and conduct during his time in the General Assembly.

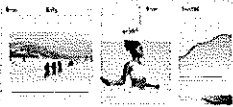
May is being held without bail at the Edgefield County jail.

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Former South Carolina Rep. R.J. May to represent himself in federal court

Story by Caroline Yaffa • 1w • 1 min read



Former South Carolina Rep. R.J. May to represent himself in federal court

COLUMBIA, S.C. (WSPA) — Former South Carolina Rep. R.J. May III was given permission by a judge on Thursday to represent himself in trial in federal court next month as he faces a 10-count indictment for possessing child sexual abuse material.

Investigators said they connected him to an account sharing child sexual abuse material through an app called "Kik." The app flagged several videos from an account called "Joe Bidennnn69." Agents said they tracked that activity to May's home internet and cell phone.

May resigned last month from the House, saying the decision was "in the best interest" of his family and constituents.

RJ May Resignation LetterDownload

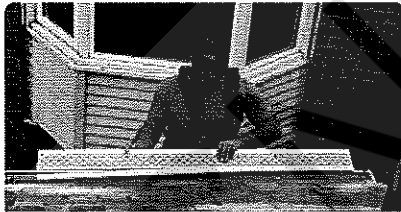
Federal public defender Jenny Smith and co-counsel Jeremy Thompson were assigned to his case, but as of Thursday, he will be solo.

May's trial is set for Oct 9, with jury selection scheduled the day before.

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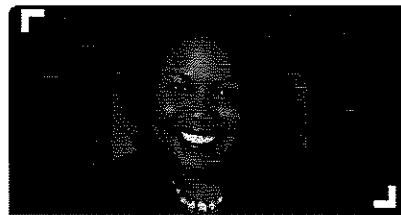
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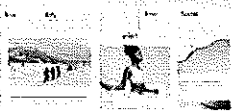
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South Carolina lawmaker resigns after arrest on child sex abuse material charges

Story by Fernando Cervantes Jr., USA TODAY • 1mo • 2 min read



Headshot of RJ May who resigned from the South Carolina House of Representatives. © Courtesy of the South Carolina House of Representatives

A state lawmaker in South Carolina resigned from his seat months after being arrested for alleged distribution of child sexual abuse material, the state's House speaker announced on Aug. 11.

RJ May, a 38-year-old Republican state representative and former South Carolina House Freedom Caucus strategist, was accused of using the screen name "joebidennnn69" on the social media network Kik to exchange 220 different files of toddlers and young children.



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"I have decided that it is in the best interest of my family and constituents to resign immediately from the South Carolina House of Representatives," reads a resignation letter sent from May to the state's House Speaker Murrell Smith and obtained by local media outlets, including the Post and Courier and South Carolina Daily Gazette.

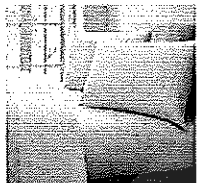
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In a statement, the South Carolina House Freedom Caucus, which May helped found, said the resignation is "long overdue."

"The people of District 88 deserve true and honorable representation," the statement said.

According to court records obtained by USA TODAY, May exchanged the explicit files across five days in spring 2024. The records say the files were uploaded and downloaded on May's home Wi-Fi network and on his cellphone.

In a June press release from the U.S. Attorney's Office, officials said May faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison, a fine of \$250,000 and five years of probation. May is being held at the Edgefield County jail, awaiting the start of his trial.



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May's legal representation did not immediately respond to USA TODAY's request for comment on Aug. 12.

Fernando Cervantes Jr. is a trending news reporter for USA TODAY. Reach him at fernando.cervantes@gannett.com and follow him on X @fern_cerv_.

This article originally appeared on USA TODAY: South Carolina lawmaker resigns after arrest on child sex abuse material charges

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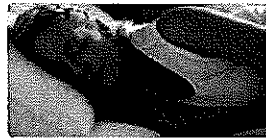
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Anti-LGBTQ+ Republican resigns after arrest on child sexual abuse material charges

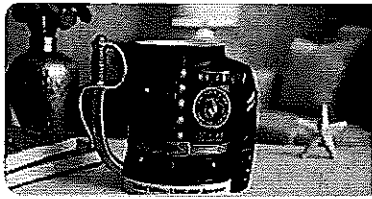
Story by Sophie Perry • 1mo • 3 min read



Anti-LGBTQ+ Republican resigns after arrest on child sexual abuse material charges

An anti-LGBTQ+ South Carolina Republican who backed drag and trans healthcare bans to "protect childhood innocence" has resigned from his seat after he was arrested and charged with distributing images of child sexual abuse.

Robert John 'RJ' May III – known as RJ May – was a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives for the state's 88th district and is former South Carolina House Freedom Caucus strategist.



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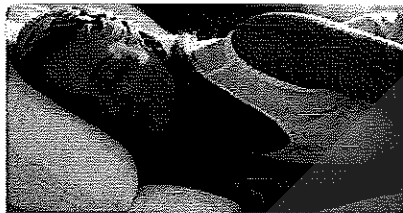
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The 38-year-old was arrested and charged in June with 10 counts of distributing sexual abuse material involving children.

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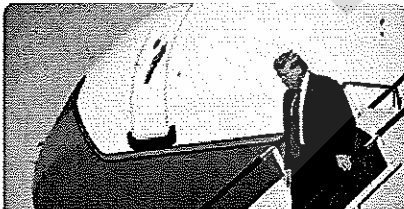


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South Carolina lawmaker in jail on child sex abuse material charges resigns from office

Politics Aug 12, 2025 2:16 PM EDT

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A South Carolina Republican lawmaker in jail awaiting trial on charges he distributed sexual abuse material involving children has resigned his seat in the state House.

RJ May's resignation letter was dated Thursday but didn't arrive at the offices of House leadership until Monday morning.

May wrote that "it is in the best interests of my family and constituents to resign immediately." It does not mention the 10 charges he faces or the more than a decade in prison that prosecutors have suggested May could face if convicted.

The return address on the letter was May's Lexington post office box. He is currently being held at the Edgefield County jail without bond as he awaits trial as soon as next month.

May's federal public defender did not respond to an email Monday.

The three-term Republican is accused of using the screen name "joebidennnn69" to exchange 220 different files of toddlers and young children involved in sex acts on the Kik social media network for about five days in spring 2024, according to court documents that graphically detailed the videos.

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The files were uploaded and downloaded using May's home Wi-Fi network and his cellphone, prosecutors said. Some were hidden by the use of a private network but others were directly linked to his internet addresses.

At his arraignment, May's lawyer suggested someone could have used the Wi-Fi password that was shown on a board behind a photo May's wife may have posted online.

Each of the 10 charges carries a five-to-20-year prison sentence upon conviction.

Calls for May's resignation were nearly unanimous in the South Carolina House, including members who were most closely aligned with May as he helped found the Freedom Caucus of the chamber's most conservative members. The House Ethics Committee last month started an investigation that appeared to be the first step in trying to kick May out of the House.

May worked as a political consultant. He was elected in 2020 and in his five years in the House upset many mainstream Republicans as he continued to run campaigns for people looking to knock out incumbents in GOP primaries.

The timing of May's resignation should allow his replacement to be chosen in a special election before the 2026 General Assembly session starts in January.

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By — Jeffrey Collins, Associated Press

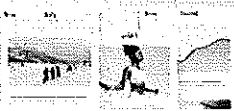
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South Carolina lawmaker awaiting trial on child sex abuse material charges resigns from office

Story by JEFFREY COLLINS • 1mo • 2 min read



South Carolina Lawmaker Arrested
© Jeffrey Collins

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A South Carolina Republican lawmaker in jail awaiting trial on charges he distributed sexual abuse material involving children has resigned his seat in the state House.

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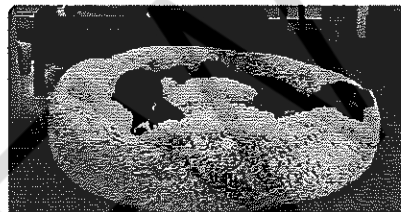
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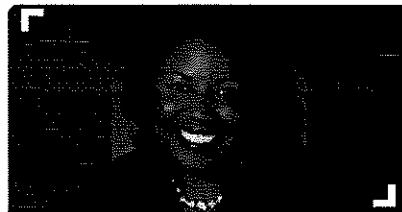
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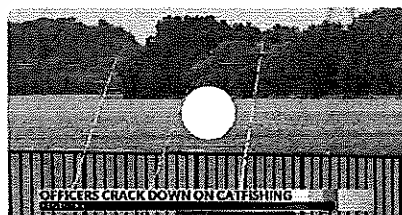
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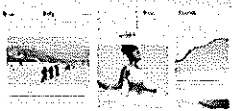
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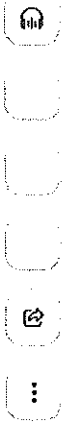
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Jailhouse texts show accused child porn distributor RJ May worries, will fight

Story by John Monk • 1mo • 6 min read



Representative RJ. May, R-Lexington, watches as the South Carolina House of Representatives selects Murrell Smith, R-Sumter, as speaker on Tuesday, December 3, 2024.

Jailhouse texts from accused child sex abuser and former SC lawmaker Robert "RJ" May III show a Bible-quoting man with numerous woes - about money, about getting a lawyer, about legal strategy, and about what people think of him.

"I'd never hurt your kids or mine," May, 38, a married father of two young children, told one unidentified person he texted June 25, a day after he was given a taxpayer-funded lawyer by U.S. Magistrate Judge Shiva Hodges.

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The person had texted May about the charges against him. "You have no idea the depth of pain, heartbreak, and brokenness you have caused - specifically your parents and sister. ... We don't even know if we should fear that our kids have somehow been involved in this mess."

Earlier in June, during a hearing to determine whether May would stay in jail while he waited for trial, Magistrate Judge Hodges specifically cited the potential danger of May to any and all children as a reason to deny May bond. Federal prosecutor Scott Matthews had argued that May "has a sexual interest in children the same age as his own children."

"I am concerned about the danger to the community, specifically to Mr. May's own minor children, as well as to other children who are

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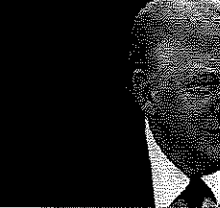
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Story by NIKOLETTE MILLER • 3W • 1 min read

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RJ May trial date pushed back



COLUMBIA, S.C. (WSPA) — The federal trial for former South Carolina lawmaker RJ May (R-Lexington) has been postponed, with jury selection now set to begin on October 8th.

May, of West Columbia, faces ten counts of distributing child sex abuse material, was originally scheduled to go on trial in September.



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May was a representative for Lexington County before he resigned earlier this month following his arrest.

May wrote that "it is in the best interests of my family and constituents to resign immediately." His letter of resignation did not





mention the 10 charges he faces or the more than a decade in prison that prosecutors have suggested May could face if convicted.

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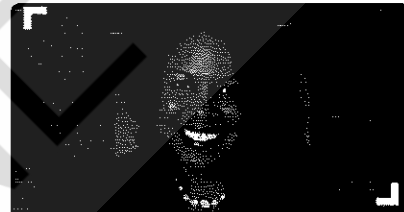
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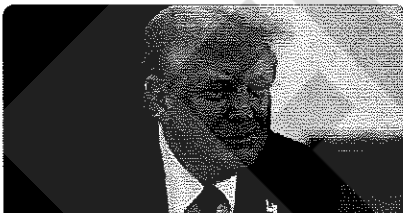


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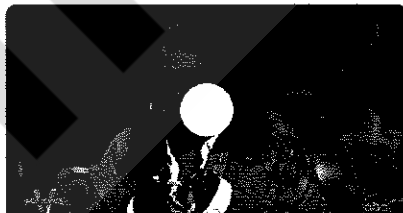


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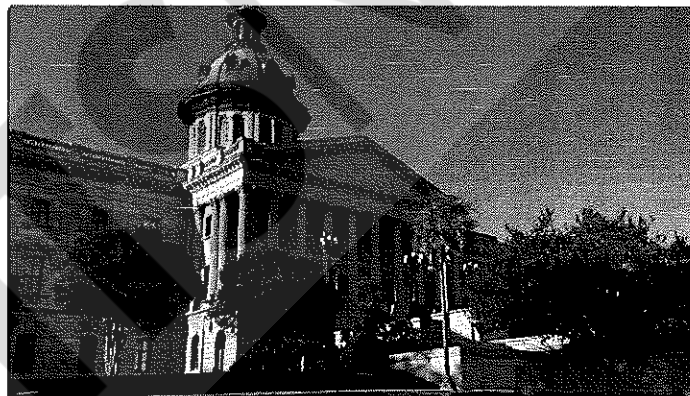
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Date set for special election to replace ex-SC Rep. RJ May

Story by WIS News 10 Staff • 1mo • 1 min read



WIS News 10
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COLUMBIA, S.C. (WIS) - Dates are now set for the process to replace a now-former South Carolina state lawmaker via special election.

The South Carolina Election Commission confirmed that a special election for South Carolina House District 88, based in Lexington County, will be held on Dec. 23.



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The following other dates were made official on Tuesday:

- Candidate filing opens: Aug. 29
- Candidate filing closes: Sept. 6
- Primary election: Oct. 21
- Primary election runoff (if necessary): Nov. 4
- Special election: Dec. 23

The election will be held to fill the seat of ex-state Rep. RJ May.

May resigned Aug. 7, months after being handed down a 10-count federal indictment linked to child sexual abuse material. News of his resignation was first made public on Monday.

This is a developing story. Stay with WIS News 10 for updates.

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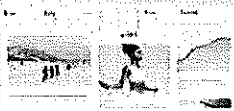
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SC Rep. requests meeting of General Assembly to consider expulsion of Rep RJ May

Story by FOX Carolina News Staff • 1mo • 1 min read



FILE - South Carolina Rep. RJ May, R-West Columbia, walks down the aisle of the House on Tuesday, March 14, 2023, in Columbia, South Carolina.
© AP Photo/Jeffrey Collins, File

COLUMBIA, S.C. (FOX Carolina) - A representative with the South Carolina House of Representatives sent a letter requesting that the General Assembly reconvene to consider the expulsion of a state lawmaker from Lexington County.

Our sister station WIS reported that Representative R.J. May from Lexington County was arrested and charged with 10 counts of distributing child sexual abuse material.



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WIS said May was also suspended from his role in the South Carolina House of Representatives as a result of a letter by South Carolina House Speaker Murrell Smith.

Representative Jordan S. Pace from Berkley County sent a letter to the Speaker of the House for the SC House of Representatives and the President of the South Carolina Senate on Monday to request a reconvening of the General Assembly on or before Aug. 27.

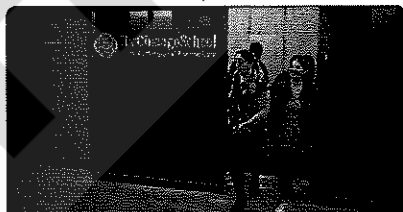
This session would only require a two-thirds majority from the House to expel May, the letter said.

The letter said May has not resigned from his position, and Pace is concerned the constituents of May's district in Lexington County will be without representation during the regular session in January, due to the time needed to complete a special election.

The full letter is available here:

Sine Die Reconvene Request by tyler.scott on Scribd

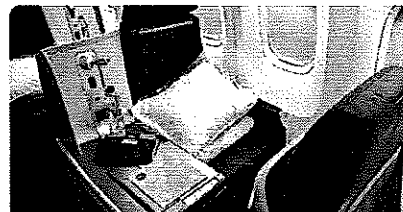
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South Carolina lawmaker awaiting trial on child sex abuse material charges resigns from office

The Associated Press (<https://wtop.com/author/the-associated-press/>)

August 11, 2025, 2:04 PM

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A South Carolina Republican lawmaker in jail awaiting trial on charges (<https://apnews.com/article/sex-crimes-south-carolina-lawmaker-rj-may-81901be6f700f24a99ba3346086f8b61>) he distributed sexual abuse material involving children has resigned his seat in the state House.

RJ May's resignation letter was dated Thursday but didn't arrive at the offices of House leadership until Monday morning.

May wrote that "it is in the best interests of my family and constituents to resign immediately." It does not mention the 10 charges he faces or the more than a decade in prison that prosecutors have suggested May could face if convicted.

The return address on the letter was May's Lexington post office box. He is currently being held at the Edgefield County jail without bond as he awaits trial as soon as next month.

May's federal public defender did not respond to an email Monday.

The three-term Republican is accused of using the screen name "joebidennnn69" to exchange 220 different files of toddlers and young children involved in sex acts on the Kik social media network for about five days in spring 2024, according to court documents that graphically detailed the videos.

The files were uploaded and downloaded using May's home Wi-Fi network and his cellphone, prosecutors said. Some were hidden by the use of a private network but others were directly linked to his internet addresses.

At his arraignment, May's lawyer suggested someone could have used the Wi-Fi password that was shown on a board behind a photo May's wife may have posted online.



Each of the 10 charges carries a five-to-20-year prison sentence upon conviction.

Calls for May's resignation were nearly unanimous in the South Carolina House, including members who were most closely aligned with May as he helped found the Freedom Caucus of the chamber's most conservative members. The House Ethics Committee last month started an investigation that appeared to be the first step in trying to kick May out of the House.

May worked as a political consultant. He was elected in 2020 and in his five years in the House upset many mainstream Republicans as he continued to run campaigns for people looking to knock out incumbents in GOP primaries.

The timing of May's resignation should allow his replacement to be chosen in a special election before the 2026 General Assembly session starts in January.

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U.S. NEWS

Prosecutors say Republican South Carolina lawmaker used 'joebidennnn69' to send child sex material

BY **JEFFREY COLLINS**

Updated 7:42 PM EDT, June 12, 2025

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A Republican member of the South Carolina House who prosecutors say used the screen name "joebidennnn69" has been arrested and charged with 10 counts of distributing sexual abuse material involving children.

RJ May was arrested at his Lexington County home after a lengthy investigation and was ordered Thursday by a federal judge to remain jailed until his trial.

The three-term Republican is accused of using "joebidennnn69" to exchange 220 different files of toddlers and young children involved in sex acts on the Kik social media network for about five days in spring 2024, according to court documents that graphically detailed the videos.

Each charge carries a five-to-20 year prison sentence upon conviction and prosecutors suggested May could spend over a decade in prison if found guilty.

The files were uploaded and downloaded using May's home Wi-Fi network and his cellphone, prosecutors said. Some were hidden by the use of a private network but others were directly linked to his internet

addresses.

May says someone else could have used his Wi-Fi

At his arraignment, May's lawyer suggested someone could have used the Wi-Fi password that was shown on a board behind a photo May's wife may have posted online. Attorney Dayne Phillips also suggested investigators didn't link each Kik message directly to May.

Prosecutors asked that May, 38, not be given bail because he lives at home with his wife and young children, and some of the files he is accused of sharing feature children of about the same age as his.

May investigated for paid sex in Colombia

Prosecutors said they also investigated whether May used a fake name to travel to Colombia three times after finding videos on his laptop of him allegedly having sex with three women. An agent from the Department of Homeland Security testified the women appeared to be underage and were paid. U.S. agents have not been able to locate the women.

Prosecutors said May created a Facebook account with his fake name and his internet history showed him switching between his real account and the fake one and even searching his primary opponent from the fake login.

Phillips, May's lawyer, told the courtroom that no sexual images of toddlers or young children were found directly on his laptop or cellphone.

After spending the night in jail, May appeared in court Thursday in shorts and a T-shirt with his wrists and ankles in cuffs. After being ordered to stay in jail, he appeared to blow a kiss at his wife, who was at the hearing.

May's political rise to the state House

After May's election in 2020, he helped create the Freedom Caucus, a group of the House's most conservative members who say mainstream House Republicans aren't the true conservative heart of the GOP. He also helped the campaigns of Republicans running against GOP House incumbents.

"We as legislators have an obligation to insure that our children have no harm done to them," May said in January 2024 on the House floor during a debate on transgender care for minors.

His son charmed the House in April 2021 when May brought him to visit for his third birthday and the boy practiced his parade wave around the chamber.

The Freedom Caucus released a statement Wednesday night saying they kicked May out of their group after his arrest.

May spent a quiet 2025 House session

Many of his onetime friends have distanced themselves from May as rumors of the investigation spread through the Statehouse. During the current session he could largely be seen at his corner desk in the back of the 124-seat chamber, mixing with very few colleagues.

The House Speaker suspended May from his seat after the indictment.

May's lawyer suggested he could have been framed and asked the Homeland Security agent if she knew that May had a lot of political enemies.

"There are a fair amount of people who don't like me either, Mr. Phillips," agent Britton Lorenzen replied.



JEFFREY COLLINS

Collins covers South Carolina from Columbia for The Associated Press. He has been with the AP since 2000.



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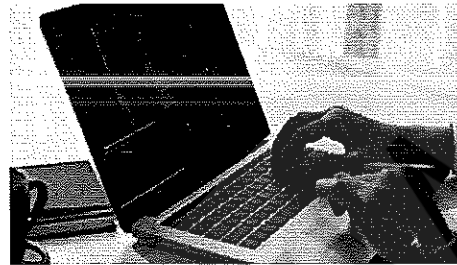
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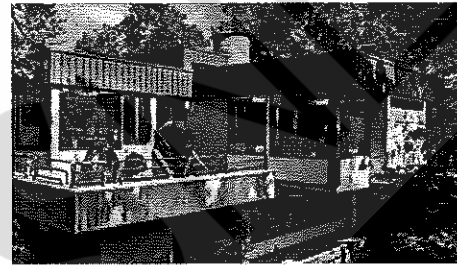
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Republican SC Rep. RJ May charged with distributing child sex abuse material

South Carolina Public Radio | By Maayan Schechter

Published June 12, 2025 at 9:14 AM EDT



Jeffrey Collins/AP / AP

South Carolina Rep. RJ May, R-West Columbia, walks down the aisle of the House on Tuesday, March 14, 2023, in Columbia, South Carolina. (AP Photo/Jeffrey Collins)

South Carolina Rep. RJ May, a Lexington County Republican who cofounded the House Freedom Caucus, was indicted on federal charges of distributing child sex abuse material. Following indictment, House Speaker suspends May.

Editor's Note: This report contains information about child sexual abuse material.

South Carolina Public Radio News a...

1A

South Carolina Republican lawmaker RJ May will remain in jail as he awaits his federal trial on 10 counts of distributing child sexual abuse material.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Shiva Hodges said Thursday that the weight of evidence against May is significant. She cited his international travels and the danger he possibly poses to himself, his two young children and to other children.

May was arrested at his West Columbia home Wednesday, roughly 10 months after his house was raided in August 2024 by U.S. Homeland Security Investigation agents, who seized various electronic devices, such as cellphones, hard drives, a CD and thumb drives.

May, who was shackled at his wrists and ankles at his first federal court appearance Thursday in Columbia, entered a plea of not guilty.

The indictment said May, 38, used username "joebidennnn69" and alias "Eric Rentling" to exchange more than 200 files containing child sexual abuse on social messaging app Kik.

Prosecutors said they investigators were able to trace the app account to May's home IP address and cellphone.

May's attorney Dayne Phillips suggested Thursday that the accounts were not May's, and that someone could have hacked into May's Wi-Fi after May's wife posted a photo online that showed the account's password. He noted May has many "political enemies."

Phillips said investigators did not find sexual images of children on his laptop or phone.

The charges carry prison terms of five to 20 years if convicted.

He also faces a potential fine of \$250,000, plus up to five years of supervised release.

Federal prosecutors said the evidence is strong enough that May likely faces a long prison sentence if convicted.

As required by law, House Speaker Murrell Smith, R-Sumter, suspended May from office

Interim U.S. Attorney of South Carolina Bryan Stirling declined to comment further than to note May is innocent until proven guilty and deferred to court filings and testimony.

May is a longtime Republican political consultant in South Carolina.

He was elected to the S.C. House to represent District 88 in 2020, and was the main driver in the formation of the hardline House Freedom Caucus and previously was its vice chair.

The freedom caucus has since called for May's resignation from the House.

What court filings allege

May — sporting a beard and wearing a white shirt, grey shorts and boots — faced the judge for most of his two-hour hearing as prosecutors outlined the case against him.

In testimony given Thursday and in court filings, prosecutor Scott Matthews said May downloaded the Kik app in December 2023 and registered an account on March 30, 2024.

Not long after, prosecutors said May deleted the account.

But court filings said that on May 27, 2024, the app sent a cyber tip to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, flagging 50 files of child sex abuse material by Kik user "joebidennnn69" the afternoon of March 31, 2024.

Court documents said an IP address was traced to May's West Columbia home.

The report was sent to the state Attorney General's Office, then the Lexington County Sheriff's Department, which sought a search warrant for the AT&T account information.

On June 27, 2024, the sheriff's department got a search warrant for the Kik account, which court filings said showed user "joebidennnn69" had used a Samsung cellphone belonging to May that contained 220 unique files, showing child sex abuse material.

May, court filings said, distributed "220 different child pornography videos about 479 times over the course of 5 days. (May distributed the same video sometimes multiple times)"

From March 30, 2024, to April 4, 2024, that username sent or received more than 1,100 messages with other Kik users — messages that discussed trading the material with other users, prosecutors said.

Court filings said May used the Kik app via a VPN 48 times, the Verizon account for May's cellphone 67 times and May's password-protected wi-fi at home almost 960 times.

In August 2024, May's home was raided by Homeland Security Investigations.

HSI Special Agent Britton Lorenzen testified Thursday for the prosecution that a forensic review of May's phone showed that May had deleted the Kik app, along with other encrypted applications, like Telegram.

All were deleted within seconds of one another, Lorenzen said.

May is also accused of using another alias, "Eric Rentling," to make a Facebook account, a discovery court documents said was made through a review of May's phone. Lorenzen said the Facebook photo appears to be the back of May's head and hands.

The account, prosecutors said, was used to have no less than 40 conversations between April 12, 2023, and July 31, 2024, with young women he paid for sex around the Medellin, Colombia, area — "a place well known for sex work," court filings said.

Lorenzen testified HSI was not able to identify the young women in the videos.

Lorenzen said, in some cases, May was multitasking on his phone while videos were sent over Kik. Records, she said, showed May on the phone with his wife, looking up Statehouse legislation and sending a "happy Easter" text message to a friend.

Who is RJ May?

May, a former executive director of the state Club for Growth who runs Republican campaigns with his firm Ivory Tusk Consulting, was elected to his first two-year term in the S.C. House in 2020.

His LinkedIn account shows various work in year's past for South Carolina Republicans

May, a married father of two children under the age of 10, last won reelection in November 2024. He was challenged by a write-in candidate.

In 2022, May helped launch the hardline House Freedom Caucus, serving as the group's vice chair at the time.

Not long after the group's formation, May found himself at odds with House leadership — an intraparty breakup largely sparked by May's own professional campaign work that sought to oust a sitting incumbent GOP lawmaker.

It led to a new set of House GOP Caucus rules that forbid Republican legislators from joining the mainstay caucus — a private forum for members to talk about policy and strategy openly — and campaigning against Republican incumbents.

May and more than a dozen conservative colleagues refused to sign the rules, declaring the campaign prohibition as a direct attack on May's work and a "loyalty oath."

He has since been suspended from the group.

With a looming indictment, May continued to show up for the South Carolina legislative session that began Jan. 14 and officially ended May 8. Unlike his early years in the Statehouse, however, May stayed mostly at his desk.

May also declined to answer reporters' specific questions about the investigation or the indictment, only saying, "The people of District 88 elected me to do a job, and that's what I'm here to do."

He did not take the floor to oppose or support bills and was mostly observed on his phone.

He did participate in votes.

And, unlike in his first two terms, May did not file any legislation this year.

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Maayan Schechter

Maayan Schechter (My-yahn Schek-ter) is a news reporter with South Carolina Public Radio and ETV. She worked at South Carolina newspapers for a decade, previously working as a reporter and then editor of The State's S.C. State House and politics team, and as a reporter at the Aiken Standard and the Greenville News. She grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, and graduated from the University of North Carolina-Asheville in 2013.

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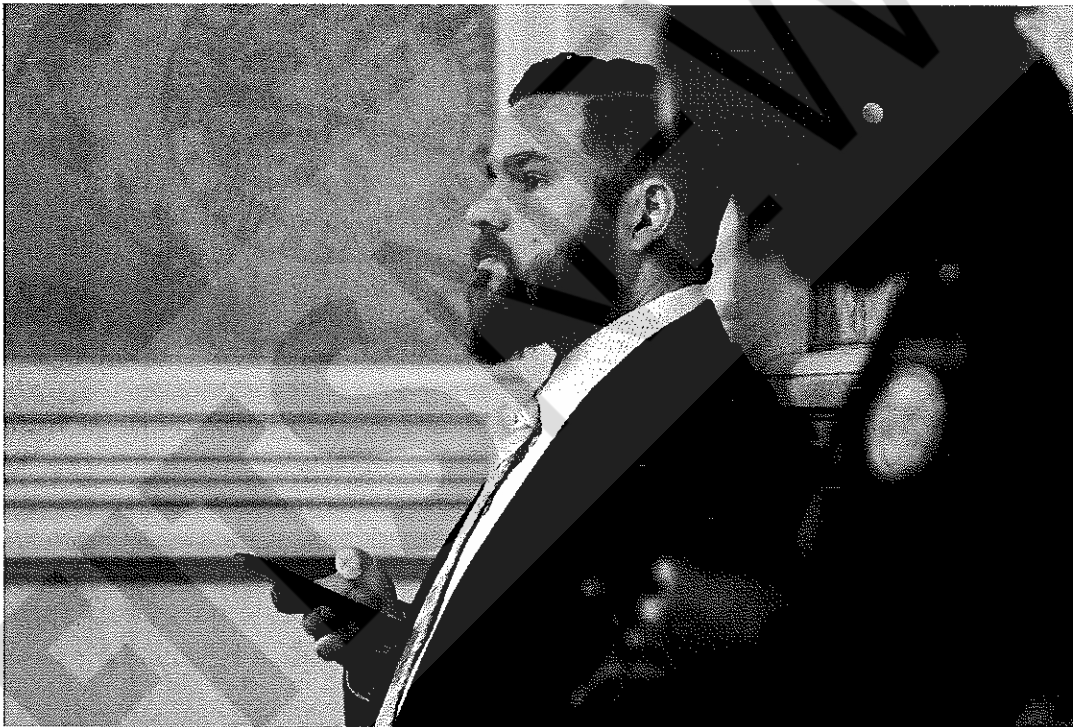


COURTS STATEHOUSE

How former Rep. RJ May is preparing from jail for trial on charges of sending child sex abuse videos

May asked a judge to throw out a search warrant used to seize electronics from his home

BY: **SKYLAR LAIRD** - SEPTEMBER 10, 2025 4:49 PM



📷 Rep. RJ May, R-West Columbia, listens from the back of the House chamber during an organizational session on Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024 at the Statehouse in Columbia, SC. (Photo by Mary Ann Chastain/Special to the SC Daily Gazette)

COLUMBIA – Former state Rep. RJ May walked into federal court Wednesday with a legal motion consisting of 32 pages handwritten on the front and back of lined paper.

May, a founder of the South Carolina House's ultra-conservative Freedom Caucus, opted last week to defend himself against charges of distributing images and videos of children being sexually abused.

That means he must prepare for his October trial from his cell at the Edgefield County jail.

3:25-cr-00778-CMC Date Filed 09/10/25 Entry Number 64 Page 1 of 32 MAY 1

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA }
v. } CASE NO. 3:25-CR-778 (CMC)
ROBERT JOHN MAY, III, }
Defendant } MOTION TO SUPPRESS AND REQUEST
A GRANTS HEARING

COMES NOW the defendant Robert John May, III, pursuant to Fed. R. Crim. P. 12 to: (1) suppress items seized during a search of his home on August 5, 2024; (2) request this Court order a hearing regarding government misconduct in procuring the issuance of a search warrant pursuant to *Franks v. Delaware*, 438 U.S. 154 (1978); and (3) request Special Agent Britton Baker Lorenzen of Homeland Security Investigations to testify at this hearing.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On May 27, 2024, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children ("NCMEC") received a CyberTip from Kik¹ regarding activity on its platform between March 30 and April 4, 2024. The Lexington County

He has remained there without bond since his arrest June 11. He resigned his House seat last month, amid the federal charges and an ongoing investigation into his conduct by the House Ethics Committee.

May's former public defense attorneys are on standby to help answer legal questions, but they can't help with the actual content of his case, U.S. District Judge Cameron McGowan Currie reminded May during a half-hour hearing Wednesday morning.

May used some of that help in court Wednesday. When prosecutors used legal jargon to describe how their evidence was numbered, May told the judge his standby attorneys were explaining the numbering system to him.

He also asked Currie whether he could request a sample motion from an unrelated case to make sure his own motions were formatted correctly, which Currie approved.

To build his defense, May will go back and forth between the jail and the Office of Homeland Security in Columbia – a roughly 75-minute drive each way. The judge said he could make that trip as often as necessary.

The U.S. Attorney's Office has set up a room with a computer displaying all the evidence against him, and May can bring bagged lunches from the jail to eat while he goes through it, prosecutor Scott Matthews said Wednesday.

May's first trip to that room followed the hearing.

There is a "tremendous amount of data to go through" in May's case, public defender Jenny Smith, one of May's standby attorneys, said previously. Currie asked May to get through as much as possible ahead of a hearing on his pre-trial motions Sept. 24.

May will be able to bring documents back to his jail cell, as long as they don't contain objectionable images, Currie said. He also has access to a tablet with the application Fastcase, a legal research system that May called the "poor man's Westlaw," referring to the more expensive legal research website available on state prisoners' tablets.

Jailed suspects can also use the tablets to send messages, receive approved images and emails and make phone calls, according to the Edgefield County Sheriff's Office. May has told relatives that he can use his tablet to listen to music or play games if he pays for them, according to messages obtained through an open records request.

May does not yet have access to the list of rules for federal criminal proceedings, he said, but Currie promised him attorneys would give that to him if the jail couldn't.

May also can't access the online court filing system from jail, meaning he has to visit the federal courthouse in Columbia each time he wants to file a motion, as he did Wednesday.

He will come back to court next Wednesday to file any remaining pre-trial motions and receive prosecutors' motions, Currie said.

The motion May filed Wednesday asked Currie to throw out a search warrant used to collect cellphones, laptops, thumb drives and

other electronics from his Lexington County house in August 2024.

While asking for the warrant, Britton Lorenzen, a special agent for Homeland Security, told a magistrate that investigators were likely to find images or videos depicting child sexual abuse even though the tip was several months old by that point because people who collect such images don't usually get rid of them, according to a sworn statement included with May's motion.

During May's June detention hearing, Lorenzen said it was "very, very common" not to find actual images and videos of child sexual abuse on a suspect's phone or computer because of how easy it is to save media to the cloud or various apps.

May argued those statements contradicted each other, suggesting Lorenzen was lying in her statement to receive the search warrant.

Without that information, May argued, the search warrant was invalid and anything found on his devices couldn't be used in court. Lorenzen's assertion that people who collect child sexual abuse materials was integral to the judge issuing the warrant, and without it, the judge likely wouldn't have signed off, May argued.

While investigators didn't find videos or images on May's devices, they did find other evidence linking May's phone and laptop to a messaging account flagged for sending videos showing children being sexually abused, Lorenzen testified during his detention hearing. Data on May's phone suggested that he had repeatedly typed "joebidennnn69," the username of the flagged account, and that the Kik messaging app, along with several other encrypted apps, had been deleted from the device.

Investigators also tracked the IP address used to send the messages back to May's house and personal phone, investigators said.

A hearing on that motion, along with any others filed in the coming weeks, is scheduled for Sept. 24.

Four Republicans and one Democrat have filed to replace May in the House. A primary election is scheduled for Oct. 21, followed by a general election Dec. 23.



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SKYLAR LAIRD  

Skylar Laird covers the South Carolina Legislature and criminal justice issues. Originally from Missouri, she previously worked for The Post and Courier's Columbia bureau.

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Former Rep. May to represent himself in trial on charges of sending child sex abuse videos

BY SKYLAR LAIRD

September 4, 2025

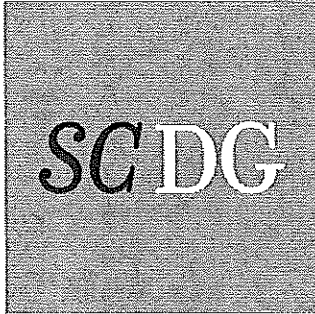


Trial for ex-SC representative pushed back to October

BY SKYLAR LAIRD

August 20, 2025

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STATES NEWSROOM

FAIR. FEARLESS. FREE.

Former South Carolina lawmaker and federal defendant **Robert John “RJ” May III** has filed a handwritten motion to suppress evidence — and requested a hearing — after formally electing to represent himself against **ten** federal counts of distributing child sexual abuse material (**CSAM**).

Federal prosecutors allege May distributed more than **220** child pornography videos over a five-day span while campaigning for reelection as a firebrand conservative and former vice chair of the S.C. Freedom Caucus between late March and early April of 2024.

According to court filings, the activity occurred on Kik, a freeware instant-messaging app once marketed to children. Investigators allege May used the alias “joebidennnn69” to exchange hundreds of child sexual abuse files, including videos depicting the rape of infants and minors.

Information regarding these alleged depravities was ultimately referred to Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the investigative arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (**DHS**) tasked with probing crimes such as child exploitation and cyber offenses.

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RELATED | RJ MAY TO REPRESENT HIMSELF IN FEDERAL CHILD PORN TRIAL

As FITSNews exclusively reported, a search warrant was subsequently executed on August 5, 2024, by HSI agents at May's home on Lake Francis Drive in Lexington County, where **35** electronic devices were seized in the presence of his wife and adolescent children.

Ten months later — after one general election and a full session of the S.C. House — FITSNews observed as May was arrested, shackled and escorted into a blacked-out Nissan Titan by HSI, the same agency that had executed the search warrant.

The following morning, June 12, 2025, open-court testimony confirmed that none of the devices seized from his home were found to contain CSAM. May later claimed the devices contained more than 20 years of personal and professional data.

Spectators were further introduced to HSI Special Agent **Britton Lorenzen**, the government's sole witness, who testified with confidence that an unrelated online alias of

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May's appeared to display a photo of him — claim FITSNews debunked using a basic reverse image search.

More on Lorenzen in a moment...



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While May's private counsel argued he was the target of a political attack, the court ultimately denied him bond and remanded him to custody pending the resolution of his case.

As jailhouse communications obtained by FITSNews revealed, May almost immediately began discussing "pumping out some motions" — particularly to suppress evidence — while continuing to shop for new attorneys and consulting with at least one S.C. State House ally.

That ally — civil attorney and Freedom Caucus member **Ryan McCabe** — stressed how "imperative" it would be for May to secure an expert witness, further noting such a figure "may turn out to be more important than the lawyer."

"Just want to be sure that you don't get caught without an expert witness," McCabe eventually wrote to May's jailhouse tablet on June 23, 2025 — one day before May told the court he could no longer afford private counsel

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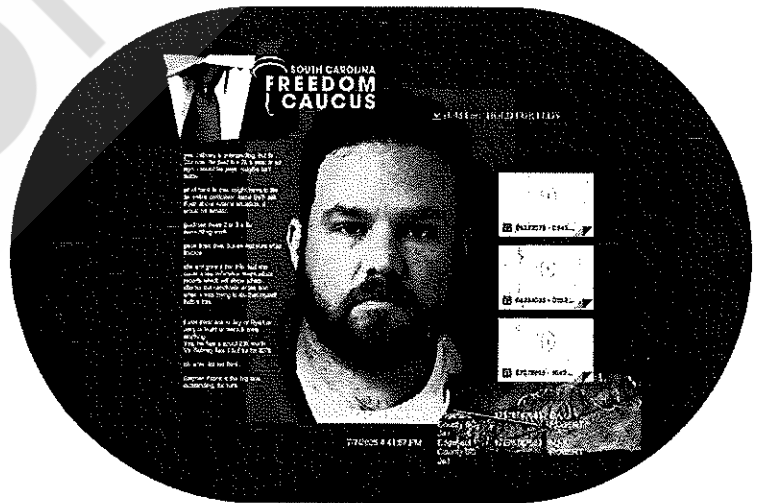
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and was subsequently appointed a federal public defender.

Whatever arguments his appointed counsel may have been preparing were likely complicated last month when federal authorities arrested **Christian Soto**, a traveling nurse from Oklahoma.

According to a federal complaint obtained by FITSNews, Soto — using the alias “randomcouplehere” — exchanged messages with “joebiden69” through Kik and received at least **50** child pornography videos during a single online chat session last year.

As for additional users who allegedly engaged with May’s alias — including “pcjames” and “johnthorton7300” — no identifications or arrests have been publicly disclosed, though that does not preclude investigative steps from having taken place.



RELATED | RJ MAY CLAIMS FORMER FREEDOM CAUCUS ALLIES OWE HIM THOUSANDS

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Separately, Lorenzen testified two “like-minded pedophiles” were operating behind VPNs, or virtual private networks — without specifying which accounts those were. Her testimony suggested DHS could not bypass such technology, a notion that is striking.

Last Wednesday (September 4, 2025), May appeared at a requested status hearing before U.S. District Court Judge **Cameron McGowan Currie**, accompanied by federal public defender **Jenny Smith** and co-counsel **Jeremy Thompson**.

May originally requested “hybrid counsel” — an uncommon arrangement that allows defendants to act as their own lawyer while retaining counsel in a limited role. Currie denied that request, prompting May to request to represent himself moving forward.

May’s unexpected push for self-representation triggered a Faretta hearing — a constitutional safeguard that comes into play when a federal defendant insists on going it alone. He was pressed to demonstrate that he fully understood not only the charges against him but also the risks of taking on his own defense.

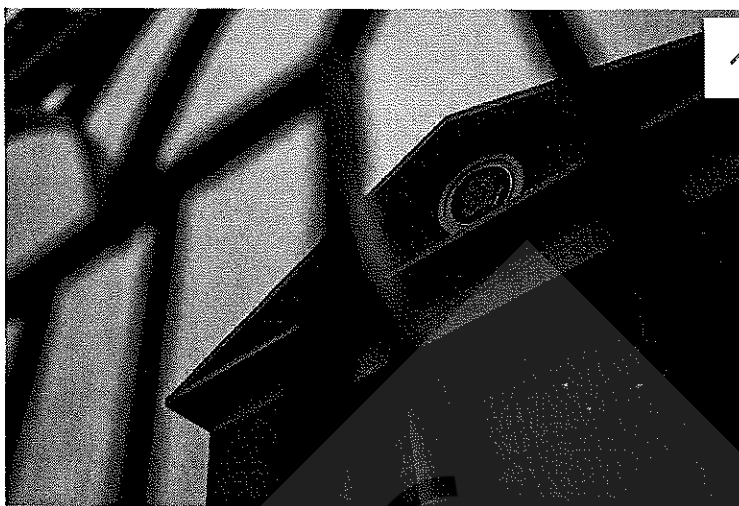
May answered in the affirmative on all counts after being warned of the many risks “inherent in proceeding” without counsel — including that he would receive no legal assistance at any stage of the case, from pretrial motions to jury selection to potential sentencing.

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(Andrew Fancher/FITSNews)

While May's request was ultimately granted, the court appointed "standby counsel" — Smith and Thompson — to remain available for guidance during trial, particularly during jury selection, which Currie noted is "complicated, even for some attorneys."

May, a political strategist with no legal background, then found himself acting as his own attorney. In his first act representing himself, May announced that he was "nearly complete" with a draft motion to suppress the federal search warrant executed at his residence the previous year.

As a result of his new counsel arrangement, multiple search warrants were unsealed for his review that same day — including the residential warrant — which he was permitted to examine before being returned to the Edgefield County Detention Center.

As arranged, May was escorted to the federal courthouse in Columbia on Wednesday morning to personally deliver his motion(.pdf), which ultimately totaled 32 pages.

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At May's June 2025 detention hearing, Lorenzen testified ([.pdf](#)) in open court that it is "very, very common" to execute search warrants and uncover no artifacts of CSAM — or "zero evidence" on seized devices — because of the prevalence of cloud-based storage systems.

May's motion to suppress the warrant argued the two statements are blatantly inconsistent, asserting that Lorenzen misled the magistrate in order to obtain the search warrant.

"With these facts in mind, it is reasonable to infer such omissions and falsities by a careful and capable police officer are unlikely to be merely negligent," May submitted.

Federal agents claim to have discovered evidence of the Kik application having been installed on May's Android smartphone, along with the username "joebidennnn69" and an email address purportedly linked to the account stored in the phone's user dictionary.

Investigators also noted May's laptop had been used to search the word "hebephile" — a clinical term describing someone with a deviant sexual interest in pubescent children — shortly after the same term appeared in a Kik chat.

A hearing on May's motion has been scheduled for Wednesday, September, 24, 2025. His federal trial is set to begin in early October.

This story may be updated.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR...



Andrew Fancher in Mitchell County, N.C.

(Dynam Nolan/FITSNews)

Andrew Fancher is a Lone Star Emmy award-winning journalist from Dallas, Texas. Cut from a bloodline of outlaws and lawmen alike, he was the first of his family to graduate college which was accomplished with honors. Got a story idea or news tip for Andy? Email him directly and connect with him socially across Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

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protected and accessed multiple times, the accounts were all deleted before the warrant was served because May was tipped off, May had an alternate ID in the name of "Eric Rentling" that he traveled under and posted under – he'd be better off taking his beating and getting his sentence started now rather than creating this circus side show as he tries to defend himself.

On the other hand, not my monkey, not my circus... might be interesting to watch.

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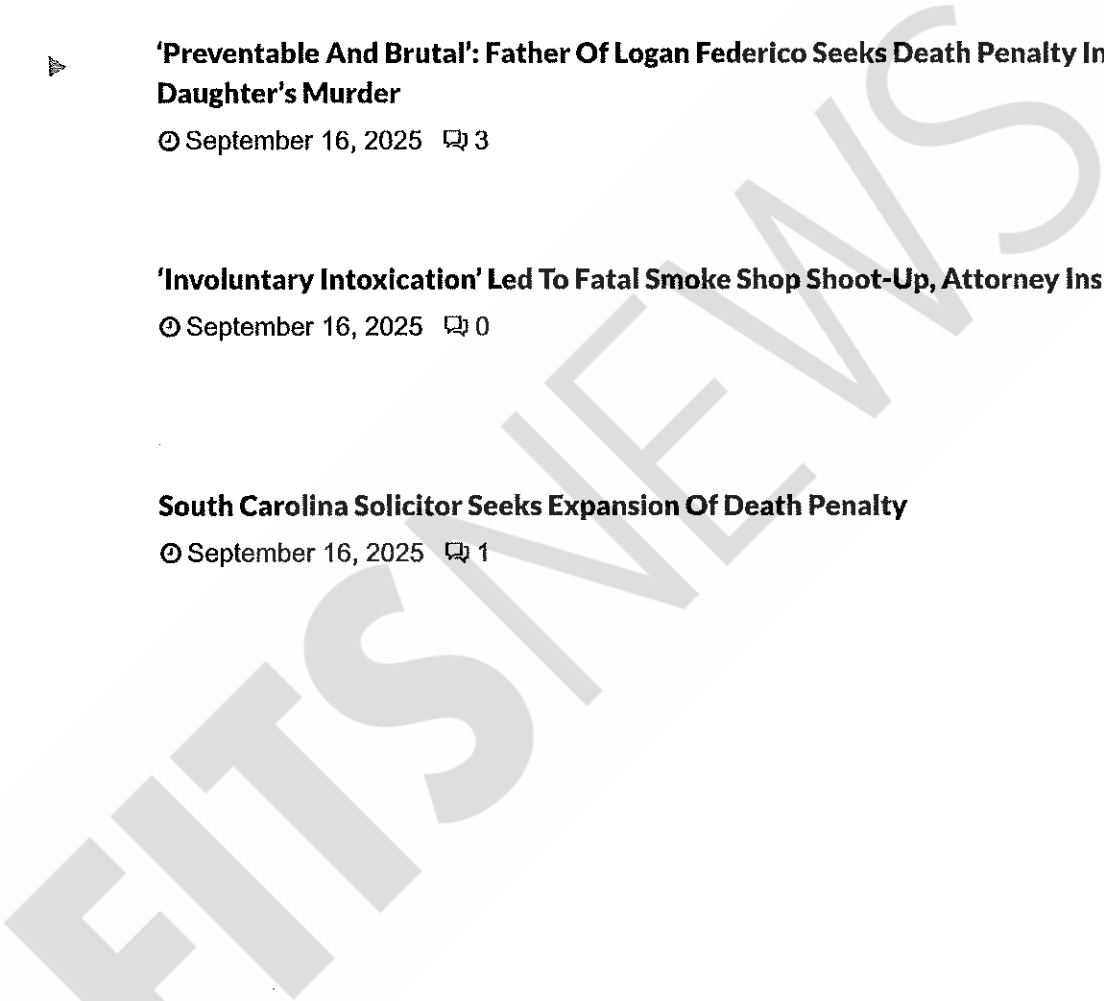
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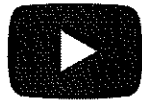
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There were major developments this week in the federal government’s case against former South Carolina state

representative **Robert John “RJ” May III** – with the disgraced politician announcing in court that he intended to represent himself in his upcoming criminal trial.

Our lead investigative reporter **Andy Fancher** – who has broken most of the major R.J. May stories over the past year – was in the Matthew J. Perry courthouse in downtown Columbia, S.C. this week covering the proceedings. In our first segment this week, Andy breaks down the implications of May’s surprising decision – discussing what may have motivated him to make it. Andy also looks at a forthcoming motion from May to suppress evidence collected by federal investigators during the course of their investigation into him – a motion May is set to argue himself next Tuesday (September 9, 2025).

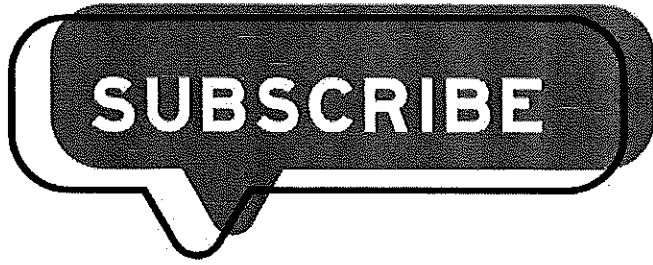
In our second segment, special projects director **Dylan Nolan** joined me to break

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Dylan and I also broke down the latest developments in the ongoing drama surrounding U.S. congresswoman **Nancy Mace** – the current frontrunner for governor of the Palmetto State. As we exclusively reported earlier this week, S.C. chief justice **John Kittredge** has consolidated a number of civil and criminal cases with ties to Mace – whose February 2025 “scorched earth” speech spawned all manner of legal fallout. Mace was also on the receiving end of the 2026 gubernatorial campaign’s first attack ad... a broadside Dylan and I shared with our audience.

Finally, we discussed our week’s top story – the revival of the 2022-2024 ‘Days of our Congressman’ scandal involving upstate developer/real estate mogul **Ron Rallis**. Will

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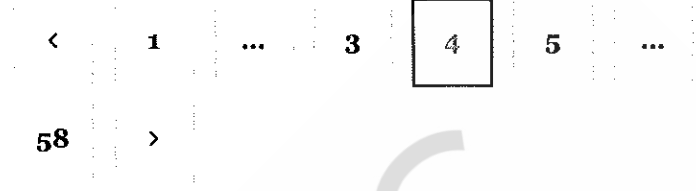
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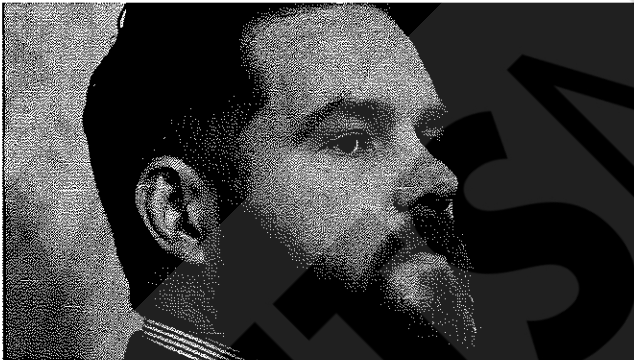
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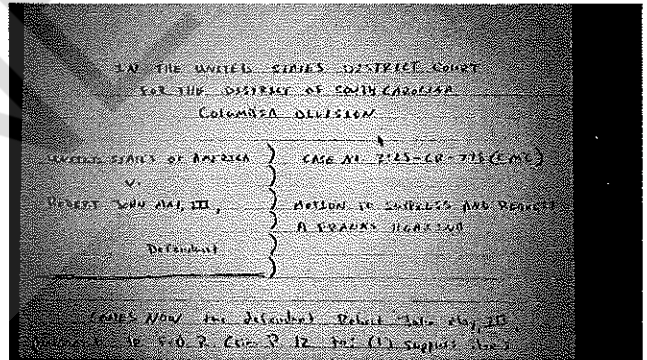
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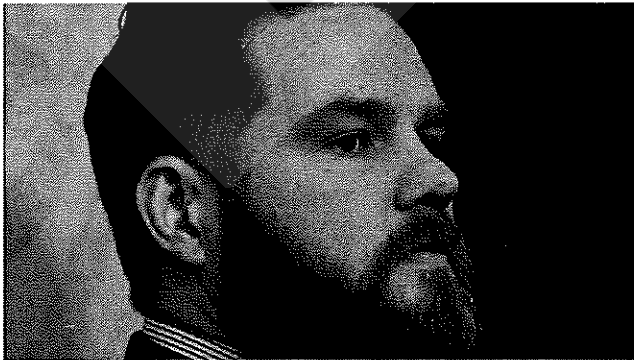
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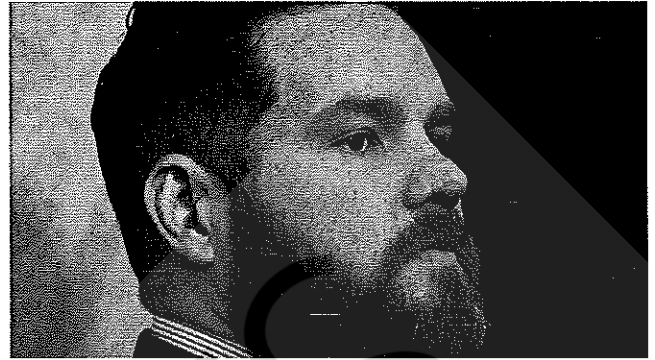
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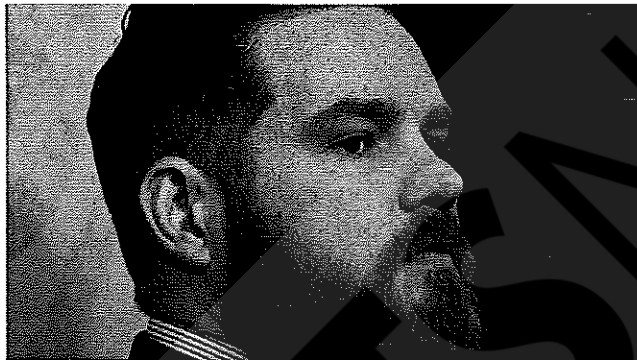
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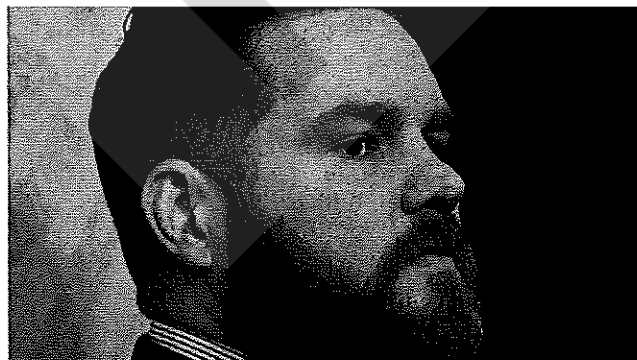
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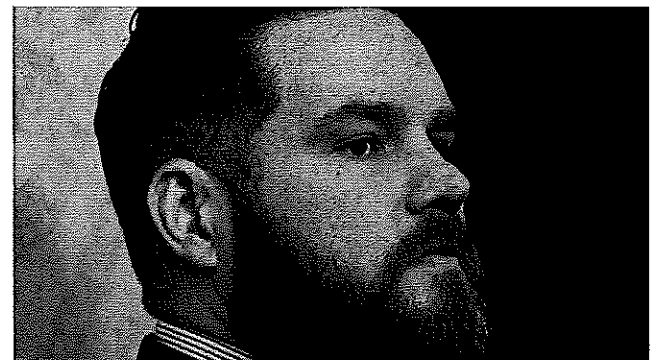
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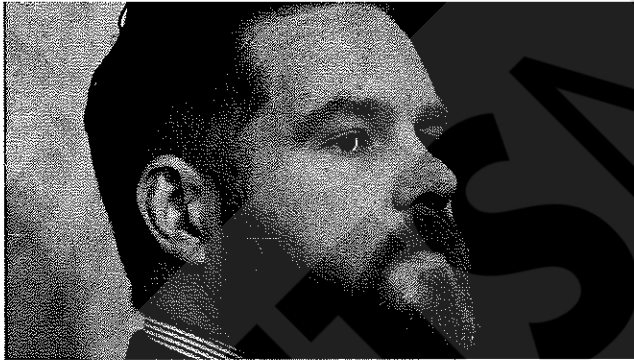
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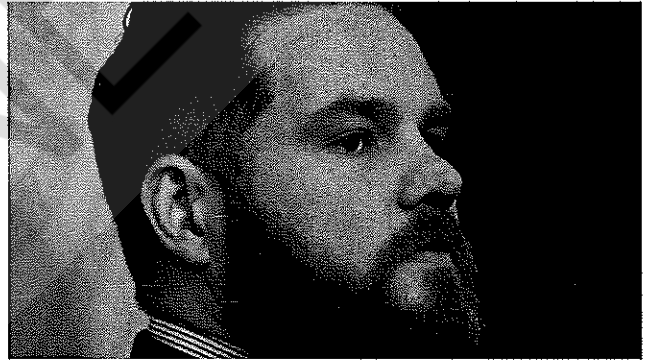
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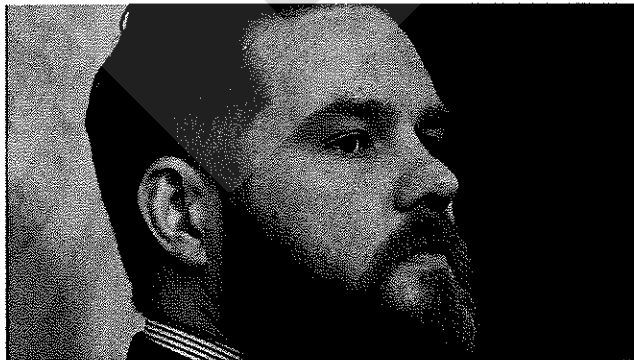
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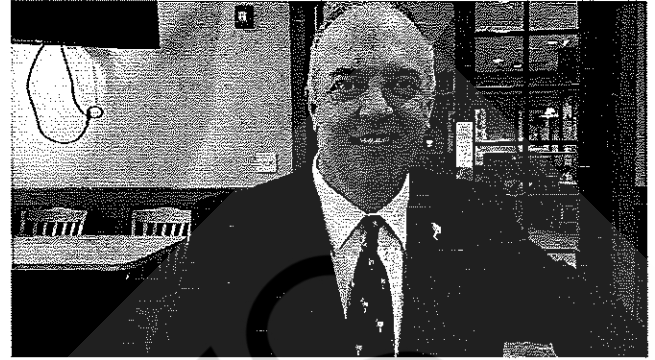
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FITSNEWS

By: **SKYLAR LAIRD** - Wednesday August 6, 2025

An Oklahoma man is accused of receiving videos of children being sexually abused from a person investigators believe to be state Rep. RJ May. Christian Soto, a registered nurse in Oklahoma City, was arrested last week on charges of receiving and possessing child pornography, as well as possessing ammunition in violation of a restraining order, [...]

Former Rep. May to represent himself in trial on charges of sending child sex abuse videos

By: **SKYLAR LAIRD** - Thursday September 4, 2025

COLUMBIA — Former Rep. RJ May can represent himself in his trial, a federal judge decided Thursday. May was arrested in June on 10 charges of sending images and videos of children being sexual abuse. He has pleaded not guilty. The founding member of the ultra-conservative Freedom Caucus resigned his House seat last month. A [...]

Freedom Caucuses push for conservative state laws, but getting attention is their big success

By: **ELAINE S. POVICH** - Wednesday April 3, 2024

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — When a Republican colleague threatened to read aloud from a 2-foot stack of books — including a biblical guide to leadership and a tome by anti-tax activist Grover Norquist — to protest inaction on his bills last week, Missouri state Sen. Rick Brattin quickly took up the cause. Seizing on a chance to [...]

How former Rep. RJ May is preparing from jail for trial on charges of sending child sex abuse videos

By: **SKYLAR LAIRD** - Wednesday September 10, 2025

COLUMBIA — Former state Rep. RJ May walked into federal court Wednesday with a legal motion consisting of 32 pages handwritten on the front and back of lined paper. May, a founder of the South Carolina House's ultra-conservative Freedom Caucus, opted last week to defend himself against charges of distributing images and videos of children [...]



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Oklahoma man charged with receiving child sexual abuse material from Rep. RJ May

Trial for ex-SC representative pushed back to October

By: **SKYLAR LAIRD** - Wednesday August 20, 2025

COLUMBIA — Former Rep. RJ May's trial on accusations of distributing videos and images of children being sexually abused should begin in October, a federal judge decided Wednesday. May, a West Columbia Republican and founding member of the ultra-conservative Freedom Caucus, resigned his House seat earlier this month. He has pleaded not guilty to the [...]

SC legislator accused of distributing videos of child sexual abuse resigns House seat

By: **SKYLAR LAIRD** - Monday August 11, 2025

COLUMBIA — Rep. RJ May has resigned his House seat two months after his arrest on charges of distributing child sexual abuse material, according to a letter the House Speaker's Office received Monday. The West Columbia Republican, who remains in jail without bond, has been suspended from the House without pay since his June arrest, [...]

SC representative arrested, booked in Lexington County jail

By: **SKYLAR LAIRD** - Wednesday June 11, 2025

COLUMBIA — A state legislator and founding member of the ultra-conservative House Freedom Caucus was booked in the Lexington County jail Wednesday, according to online jail records. No charges were listed for 38-year-old Rep. RJ May, a West Columbia Republican. Instead, a jail booking with his name and age indicated he was being held "pre-trial" [...]

SC representative charged with distributing child sexual abuse material

By: **SKYLAR LAIRD** - Thursday June 12, 2025

COLUMBIA — A state representative will remain in jail without bond on charges of distributing child sexual abuse material, a federal judge decided Thursday. Rep. RJ May, a founding member of the state's ultra-conservative Freedom Caucus, faces 10 counts of distributing

child sexual abuse material, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.
May pleaded not guilty [...]

Dorchester County legislator resigns from SC House seat

By: **SEANNA ADCOX** - Wednesday August 20, 2025

A Dorchester County Republican resigned from the South Carolina House on Wednesday, triggering another special election for a Statehouse seat. Rep. Chris Murphy submitted his "irrevocable resignation" to House Speaker Murrell Smith, with an effective date of Jan. 5. That's one day before voters go to the polls to replace him and one week before [...]

SC House speaker re-elected over Freedom Caucus opposition

By: **SEANNA ADCOX** - Wednesday December 4, 2024

Editor's note: This article was updated Wednesday following House committee assignments. COLUMBIA — The challenged re-election Tuesday of House Speaker Murrell Smith indicates the civil war between the majority Republicans and an uber-conservative faction isn't subsiding. The re-election of the Sumter Republican to a second full term leading the South Carolina House was never really [...]



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DEMOCRACY TOOLKIT



charges

By: **SKYLAR LAIRD** - Tuesday June 24, 2025

COLUMBIA — A taxpayer-funded attorney will defend suspended Rep. RJ May against charges of distributing child sexual abuse material, a federal judge decided Tuesday. May, a founding member of the uber-conservative House Freedom Caucus, pleaded not guilty to the charges June 12. He was arrested the day before at his West Columbia home. But the [...]

SC Freedom Caucus leader could soon face federal charges, court filing confirms

By: **ABRAHAM KENMORE** - Friday October 25, 2024

COLUMBIA — The founder of South Carolina's uber-conservative House Freedom Caucus had multiple electronic devices seized by federal law enforcement in August, which could soon be used for criminal charges, according to a document filed Thursday in federal court. A U.S. Attorney is asking the court for more time in a case involving Rep. RJ [...]

SC senator resigns seat following Alzheimer's diagnosis

By: **SKYLAR LAIRD** - Monday August 11, 2025

COLUMBIA — State Sen. Roger Nutt resigned his Upstate seat Monday after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, the Moore Republican said in a news release. Rep. Bobby Cox, a Greer Republican, has announced he will run for Nutt's seat representing parts of Spartanburg and Greenville counties. To do so, Cox also resigned Monday from his [...]

SC Republicans hopeful for tax reform, vouchers with new Senate supermajority

By: **SKYLAR LAIRD** - Monday November 18, 2024

COLUMBIA — Returning to the Statehouse with a supermajority in the House and Senate, Republicans are hopeful to easily pass priorities such as cutting taxes and restoring school choice vouchers, leaders said. However, questions remain about the details and debates in 2025,



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Public attorney to defend suspended SC representative from child sexual abuse material

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PALMETTO POLITICS

RJ May appears as his own lawyer in court for the first time

BY ANNA WILDER, AWILDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM SEP 10, 2025

Former state Rep. RJ May was in federal court Sept. 10 acting as his own lawyer for this first time. A day earlier, a House Ethics Committee considered a complaint that is widely considered to be about May.



PALMETTO POLITICS

Former SC state Rep. RJ May to represent himself in trial on child pornography charges

BY ANNA WILDER AWILDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM SEP 4, 2025

Former South Carolina Rep. RJ May told a judge that he would like to represent himself in a trial that is likely to start in October. He faces charges associated with distributing child pornography.



PALMETTO POLITICS

Trial date set for former SC state lawmaker accused of distributing child pornography

BY ANNA WILDER AWILDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM AUG 20, 2025

Former State lawmaker RJ May appeared in federal court Aug. 20 when trial dates were set surrounding charges he faces on distributing child sexual abuse material.



PALMETTO POLITICS

AG candidate David Pascoe pledges to root out corruption at the Statehouse

BY NICK REYNOLDS NREYNOLDS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM AUG 20, 2025

First Circuit Solicitor David Pascoe has made fighting Statehouse corruption a cornerstone of his young campaign for attorney general. While he offered a variety of proposals, he didn't name names.



PALMETTO POLITICS

SC Statehouse dominoes falling into place after 3 resignations on 1 day and 1 House ethics probe

BY ANNA WILDER AWILDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM UPDATED AUG 17, 2025

Three South Carolina lawmakers resigned from their positions on the same day, triggering multiple special elections. A House Ethics probe into one of the lawmakers will likely continue.



PALMETTO POLITICS

State Rep. RJ May resigns months after being charged with distributing child sex abuse material

BY NICK REYNOLDS AND ANNA WILDER NREYNOLDS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM AWILDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM AUG 11, 2025

South Carolina Rep. RJ May has resigned from office two months after his arrest on charges of distributing child sexual abuse materials.



PALMETTO POLITICS

After child porn charges, RJ May went from SC's firebrand to a symbol of what he preached against

BY ANNA WILDER AWILDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM AUG 7, 2025  12 MIN TO READ

Colleagues and close friends describe betrayal and disbelief after the arrest of RJ May. Known as a "freedom fighter" and effective monitor of change among conservatives. In June, he was indicted on 10 counts of child pornography.

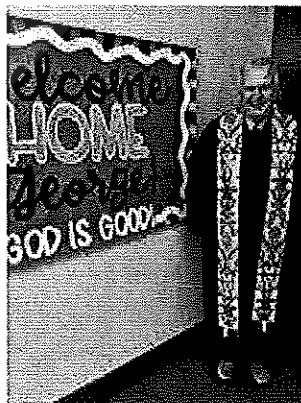


EDITORIALS

Editorial: Note to North Charleston: 'Suspended' means 'without pay'

BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF JUL 10, 2025

North Charleston's decision to keep paying City Council member Mike A. Brown after he was indicted and suspended back in February is unusual and might not even be legal.



COMMUNITY NEWS

George Howle returns as pastor to Kingstree United Methodist Church

SUBMITTED NEWS JUL 9, 2025

On Sunday, June 29, the Kingstree United Methodist congregation warmly welcomed Pastor George Howle back, recognizing his years of dedicated s...



PALMETTO POLITICS

SC House Ethics Committee retains outside lawyers to investigate member's alleged conduct

BY ANNA WILDER AWILDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM JUL 1, 2025

The House Ethics Committee met July 1 to discuss a complaint against a member of Legislature assumed to be State Rep. RJ May. May was recently indicted by a federal grand jury on 10 counts of distributing child sex abuse material.



PALMETTO POLITICS

Accused state Rep. RJ May says he's broke as he gets public defender in child pornography case

BY NICK REYNOLDS NREYNOLDS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM JUN 24, 2025

Lexington County Republican RJ May declared to a court he had no assets available to retain private counsel to defend him against 10 counts of distributing child pornography.



PALMETTO POLITICS

Bond denied for SC state lawmaker indicted on 10 counts of distributing child sexual abuse material

BY NICK REYNOLDS, ANNA WILDER AND TIFFANY TAN NREYNOLDS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM AWILDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM
TTAN@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

UPDATED JUN 12, 2025

State Rep. RJ May, R-Lexington, of the SC House Freedom Caucus has been indicted on 10 counts of distributing child sexual abuse materials.



PALMETTO POLITICS

Co-founder of SC Statehouse's conservative Freedom Caucus faces federal arraignment at 10:30 today

BY NICK REYNOLDS NREYNOLDS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM AND ANNA WILDER AWILDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM JUN 11, 2025

RJ May, a flamethrowing South Carolina House Republican who co-founded the hardline House Freedom Caucus, has been booked into the Lexington County Detention Center.

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SC Republican Rep. RJ May arrested, in Lexington County custody

Jun 11, 2025

RJ May, a Lexington County Republican lawmaker, was taken into custody Wednesday on pending federal charges.



Republican SC Rep. RJ May charged with distributing child sex abuse material

Jun 12, 2025

South Carolina Rep. RJ May, a Lexington County Republican who cofounded the House Freedom Caucus, was indicted on federal charges of distributing child sex abuse material. Following indictment, House Speaker suspends May.



Suspended SC Rep. RJ May assigned public defender in child sex abuse material case

Jun 24, 2025

Suspended SC Rep. RJ May, a Lexington County Republican, has been assigned a public defender as he faces 10 counts of distributing child sex abuse material.



Oklahoma man charged in child sex abuse material case connected to suspended SC Rep. RJ May

Aug 6, 2025

Christian Soto, identified in federal court documents as a registered nurse in Oklahoma, has been indicted in a child sex abuse material case connected to suspended South Carolina Rep. RJ May.



SC House panel starts investigation after GOP leader files ethics complaint against RJ May

Jul 1, 2025

A S.C. House panel started its investigation into a complaint made against a legislator. Last month, the chamber's majority leader filed a complaint, calling for suspended Rep. RJ May's expulsion.



Ex-SC Rep. RJ May to represent himself at trial in his federal child sex abuse material case

Sep 4, 2025

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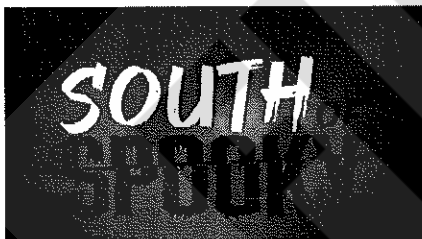
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South Carolina lawmaker awaiting trial on child sex abuse material charges resigns from office

Aug 11, 2025

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A Republican lawmaker in South Carolina has resigned from the House while awaiting trial on charges of distributing child sexual abuse material. RJ May's resignation letter, dated Thursday, reached House leadership on Monday. May was elected in 2020. His replacement could be chosen in a special election before the 2026 session.



South of Spooky

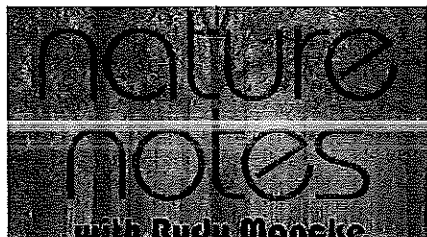


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No Smoke Eclipse

Jun 7, 1996

NPR's Richard Harris travels to Chattanooga, Tenn., where R.J. Reynolds this week began test-marketing its new 'Eclipse' cigarette. Eclipse is designed to produce much less smoke than normal cigarettes. Even though R.J. Reynolds is not marketing the cigarette as safer, smokers seem to perceive it that way. And health experts question how much safer it really is. Eclipse also raises regulatory issues.



May Apple

May 14, 2015

Rudy identifies a plant, with "umbrella-shaped leaves," that a listener found near Ft. Mill, SC.

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Oct 14, 2020

Historically tobacco plants are responsible for their share of illness and death. But two companies are using the plants to produce proteins for a vaccine. One candidate vaccine is in clinical trials.

Tobacco Company Told To Pay \$23.6B In Lawsuit

Jul 21, 2014

The R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. has been hit with a \$23.6 billion ruling from a lawsuit brought by a chain smoker's widow.

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SC Rep. RJ May resigns amid federal child sex abuse material case

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SC House Ethics Committee opens investigation into state representative

Jul 01, 2025

Oklahoma nurse accused of exchanging child sexual abuse material with SC Rep. RJ May

Aug 05, 2025

SC House Majority Leader calls to expel Rep. facing federal sex crime charges

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SC Rep. RJ May granted public defender in federal child sex abuse material case

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WATCH: Gov. McMaster comments on allegations against SC Rep. RJ May

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Jun 12, 2025

SC Rep. RJ May indicted on federal child sex abuse material charges

Jun 12, 2025

What primary results could mean for GOP fractures at SC State House

Jun 14, 2024

Prosecutors say Republican lawmaker used name 'joebiden69' to send child sex material

Jun 13, 2025

S.C. House members create Freedom Caucus

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BREAKING: Judge: Charleston County magistrate facing child porn charge to stay in custody

SC Rep. RJ May resigns amid federal child sex abuse material case



Suspended South Carolina state Rep. RJ May has resigned nearly two months after receiving a federal indictment related to child sexual abuse material.

By WIS News 10 Staff

Published: Aug. 11, 2025 at 12:57 PM EDT | Updated: Aug. 11, 2025 at 4:50 PM EDT



The South Carolina House Speaker's Office confirmed May's resignation on Monday.

"Earlier today, my office confirmed receipt of Mr. May's resignation from the House, which I have accepted with immediate effect. Our prayers remain with the victims, and we will continue to seek justice and accountability," House Speaker Murrell Smith said in a statement provided to WIS.

The office also provided a copy of May's resignation letter, which reads:

"I have decided that it is in the best interest of my family and constituents to resign immediately from the South Carolina House of Representatives. Please accept this letter as my formal resignation from the South Carolina House of Representatives. It has been an honor to serve the people of District 88."

FITSNENWS

RJ May III
District No. 88 - Lexington County
PO Box 11867
Columbia, SC 29211
(803) 470-4482



1105 Pendleton Street
323-A Blatt Building
Columbia, SC 29201

Tel. (803) 212-6726
RJMay@schouse.gov

Committee:
Agriculture, Natural Resources
and Environmental Affairs

House of Representatives

State of South Carolina

August 7, 2025

The Hon. G. Murrell Smith, Jr.
Speaker of the House of Representatives
South Carolina House of Representatives
506 Blatt Building
Columbia, SC 29201

*Received
August 11, 2025
John Fitz*

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I have decided that it is in the best interest of my family and constituents to resign immediately from the South Carolina House of Representatives. Please accept this letter as my formal resignation from the South Carolina House of Representatives. It has been an honor to serve the people of District 88.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Robert J. "R.J." May, III in black ink.
Robert J. "R.J." May, III

SC Rep. RJ May resigns amid federal child sex abuse material case (WIS)

The decision comes just over a month after the South Carolina House Ethics Committee launched an investigation into May for potential misuse of office and alleged conduct unbecoming of a member.

In a statement on Monday, House Majority Leader Davey Hiott said he hopes the ethics committee's investigation continues and "will follow its process through to conclusion, regardless of his resignation."

May, a Republican who represented the Lexington area, was indicted on 10 federal counts of distributing child sexual abuse material and was suspended soon after his arrest in June. As of Monday, he remains jailed pending a federal trial.

The resignation also comes nearly a week after a man in Oklahoma was also indicted on federal charges, with allegations including that he exchanged child sexual abuse material with May.

Those charges carry a maximum 20-year prison sentence, with a minimum of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. A pretrial conference for May is currently scheduled for Aug. 20, with jury selection starting as early as September.

BACKGROUND ON ALLEGATIONS

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, the social messaging app Kik alerted the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in April 2024 of several videos containing child sex abuse from an account with the username "joebidennnn69." Investigators found at least 10 of those videos had been shared from that account and connected it with May's mobile device and home IP address.

An unsealed memo states Kik compiled data from May's alleged account in July 2024, with content containing 265 videos depicting child sexual abuse material. The data also showed May's account allegedly sent or received nearly 1,150 messages with other Kik users, with some discussing trading child sexual abuse material.

MORE COVERAGE

Oklahoma nurse accused of exchanging child sexual abuse material with SC Rep. RJ May

SC House Ethics Committee opens investigation into state representative

SC Rep. RJ May granted public defender in federal child sex abuse material case

'Horrific': Gov. McMaster comments on allegations against SC Rep. RJ May

SC Rep. RJ May indicted on federal child sex abuse material charges, to remain detained



"Agents confirmed during surveillance of the residence, and again during the search of the residence. that the Wi-Fi at the May residence was password protected," an indictment read in part. "Thus, for the CSAM activity on Kik to have been conducted by someone other than May, that person would have had to know the Wi-Fi password."

Activity on the account was also accessed via a virtual private network as well as a Verizon Wireless account, per documents.

Documents also state that a forensic analysis of May's phone showed he deleted Kik as well as other apps Telegram, Mega and Loki Messenger, within seconds of each other in April 2024. It also showed May allegedly used Kik to discuss the use of Telegram and Messenger, which prosecutors noted "both of which are applications that have frequently been used by individuals engaged in CSAM activity due to their encryption and foreign ownership."

The memo states May's Mega account was registered to the name "Eric Rentling," which was an alias he allegedly used to create a Facebook account in that name. Investigators found the photo associated with the Facebook account "appears to be a picture of the back of May's head."

Investigators also found the Eric Rentling account had conversations in Spanish with women from Colombia that "consisted largely of arranging 'meet up' dates, time, price negotiations, and rules regarding the videoing of sexual encounters, all of which are indicative of sex work." May would also allegedly conduct Facebook searches on South Carolina political candidates while on the Eric Rentling account, including those of his most recent primary opponent.

The memo further states May's activity on Kik revealed "he has a sexual interest in children the same age as his own children" and that he has "a sexual interest in incest" between young children and their parents.

"May engaged in this behavior on his cell phone and from his own home on multiple occasions, presumably without his wife's knowledge," the memo reads. "If he can hide this criminal activity from the person he shares a bedroom with, then he can easily hide it from any court enforcement mechanism. Furthermore, there is evidence that he has recently traveled to South America to engage

Last August, federal Homeland Security Investigations agents seized nearly three-dozen devices, including cellphones, hard drives, and thumb drives, from May, according to an unsealed court document filed in October.

The court filing was a request from the U.S. Attorney's Office, asking for more time with the evidence investigators seized, which was permitted. In it, the federal government said it had expected to criminally indict May by March of this year, though it was unclear at that time what charges were expected to be brought against him or the scope and nature of the investigation.

This is a developing story. Stay with WIS News 10 for updates.

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BREAKING: Judge: Charleston County magistrate facing child porn charge to stay in custody



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Ex-SC Rep. RJ May to represent himself in federal trial over child sexual abuse material

Published: Sep. 4, 2025 at 4:33 PM EDT | Updated: Sep. 4, 2025 at 11:00 PM EDT



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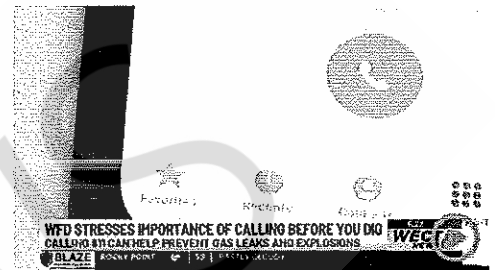
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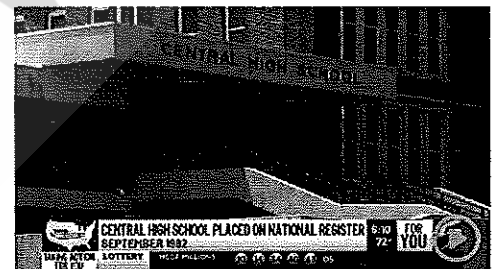
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"It's life safety for the public and it's life safety for the first responders as well. Prevention is critical here," said Community Risk Reduction Coordinator at the Wilmington Fire Department, Wendy Gianni-King.



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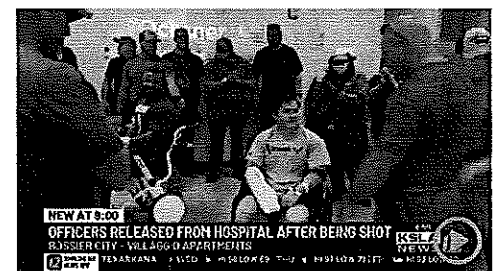
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Bossier officers released from hospital after being shot

Updated: 11 hours ago |

Officers Morris and Simon have been released after being shot on Sunday, Sept. 14.



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SC Rep. RJ May granted public defender in federal child sex abuse material case

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State Rep. RJ May has been granted a public defender in his federal child sex abuse material case after claiming his only asset was his truck.

By WIS News 10 Staff



COLUMBIA, S.C. (WIS) - A state lawmaker from Lexington County was back in federal court in his case involving child sex abuse material charges.

Rep. RJ May (R, Lexington) appeared before a federal judge Tuesday for an attorney status hearing. May appeared without legal counsel and requested that the court appoint a public defender.

May was also ordered to sign a financial affidavit saying his only asset in his name was a truck, which is what led to him being assigned a public defender.

MORE COVERAGE

'Horrific': Gov. McMaster comments on allegations against SC Rep. RJ May

SC Rep. RJ May indicted on federal child sex abuse material charges, to remain detained

A motion for discovery was also filed by May's public defender.

May has been ordered to remain detained pending trial. Records show the next scheduled hearing in the case will be Aug. 20, with jury selection scheduled for Sept. 10.

BACKGROUND

May is charged with 10 counts of distributing child sexual abuse material. Those charges carry a maximum 20-year prison sentence, with a minimum of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

He was suspended from his role in the South Carolina House following his arrest in Lexington County.



(Caption: Rep. RJ May, R – Lexington, speaks during a debate in the House of Representatives chamber of the South Carolina State House in Columbia on Jan. 17, 2024.) (Mary Green)

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, the social messaging app Kik alerted the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in April 2024 of several videos containing child sex abuse from an account with the username "joebidennnn69." Investigators found at least 10 of those videos had been shared from that account and connected it with May's mobile device and home IP address.

An unsealed memo states Kik compiled data from May's alleged account in July 2024, with content containing 265 videos depicting child sexual abuse material. The data also showed May's account allegedly sent or received nearly 1,150 messages with other Kik users, with some discussing trading child sexual abuse material.

Kik's data also included IP addresses from each message that was sent, with May's account being used at his home's Wi-Fi network 958 times.

"Agents confirmed during surveillance of the residence, and again during the search of the residence, that the Wi-Fi at the May residence was password protected," an indictment read in part. "Thus, for the CSAM activity on Kik to have been conducted by someone other than May, that person would have had to know the Wi-Fi password."

Activity on the account was also accessed via a virtual private network as well as a Verizon Wireless account, per documents.

Documents also state that a forensic analysis of May's phone showed he deleted Kik as well as other apps Telegram, Mega and Loki Messenger, within seconds of each other in April 2024. It also showed May allegedly used Kik to discuss the use of Telegram and Messenger, which prosecutors noted "both of which are applications that have frequently been used by individuals engaged in CSAM activity due to their encryption and foreign ownership."

The memo states May's Mega account was registered to the name "Eric Rentling," which was an alias he allegedly used to create a Facebook account in that name. Investigators found the photo associated with the Facebook account "appears to be a picture of the back of May's head."

Investigators also found the Eric Rentling account had conversations in Spanish with women from Colombia that "consisted largely of arranging 'meet up' dates, time, price negotiations, and rules regarding the videoing of sexual encounters, all of which are indicative of sex work." May would also allegedly conduct Facebook searches on South Carolina political candidates while on the Eric Rentling account, including those of his most recent primary opponent.

The memo further states May's activity on Kik revealed "he has a sexual interest in children the same age as his own children" and that he has "a sexual interest in incest" between young children and their parents.

"May engaged in this behavior on his cell phone and from his own home on multiple occasions, presumably without his wife's knowledge," the memo reads. "If he can hide this criminal activity from the person he shares a bedroom with, then he can easily hide it from any court enforcement mechanism. Furthermore, there is evidence that he has recently traveled to South America to engage in commercial sex, again presumably without his wife's knowledge that he ever even left the country. Thus, he is very likely to be able to evade detection by court enforcement of release conditions."

Last August, federal Homeland Security Investigations agents seized nearly three-dozen devices, including cellphones, hard drives, and thumb drives, from May, according to an unsealed court document filed in October.

The court filing was a request from the U.S. Attorney's Office, asking for more time with the evidence investigators seized, which was permitted. In it, the federal government said it had expected to

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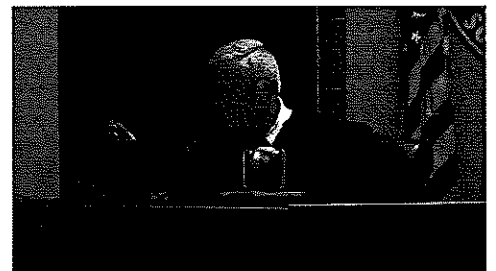
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Ex-SC Rep. RJ May seeks delay in federal trial on child sex abuse material charges

Published: Aug. 12, 2025 at 11:31 PM EDT



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A former South Carolina state representative is now looking to delay his trial on charges linked to child sex abuse material.

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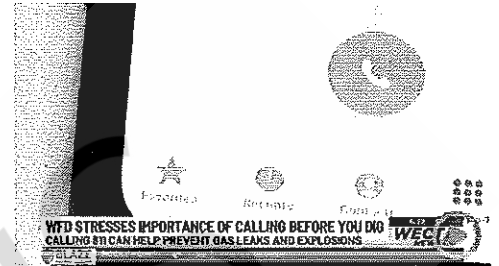
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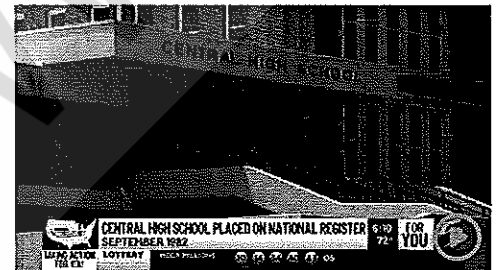
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"It's life safety for the public and it's life safety for the first responders as well. Prevention is critical here," said Community Risk Reduction Coordinator at the Wilmington Fire Department, Wendy Gianni-King.



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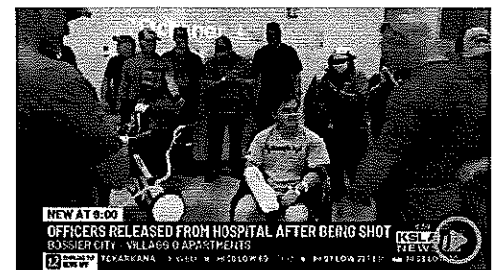
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Bossier officers released from hospital after being shot

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Officers Morris and Simon have been released after being shot on Sunday, Sept. 14.



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SC Rep. RJ May resigns amid federal child sex abuse material case

Published: Aug. 11, 2025 at 1:57 PM EDT



Suspended South Carolina state Rep. RJ May has resigned nearly two months after receiving a federal indictment related to child sexual abuse material.

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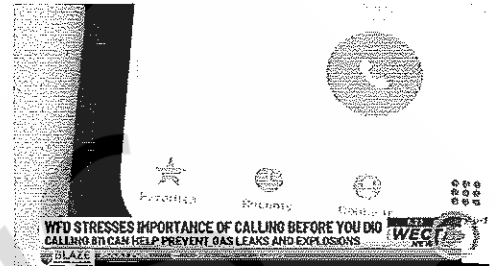
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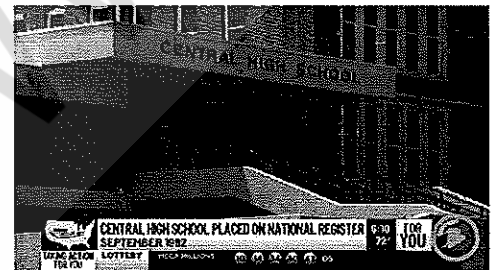
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BREAKING: Judge: Charleston County magistrate facing child porn charge to stay in custody x

SC House Ethics Committee opens investigation into state representative

The House Ethics Committee meets on the grounds of the South Carolina State House in Columbia on July 1, 2025.

By Mary Green

Published: Jul. 1, 2025 at 10:50 PM EDT | Updated: Jul. 1, 2025 at 11:20 PM EDT



COLUMBIA, S.C. (WCSC) - A member of South Carolina's House of Representatives is now under investigation by fellow lawmakers.

On Tuesday, the House Ethics Committee unanimously voted to open an investigation into a current state representative for potential misuse of office and alleged conduct unbecoming of a member.

Because of House rules requiring confidentiality for ethics complaints and investigations, members were not able to disclose which person specifically they were investigating.

But the vote comes just weeks after Rep. RJ May, R-Lexington, was federally indicted on 10 counts of distributing child sex abuse material.

May has been suspended from the House, as required by law upon his indictment, and remains in jail, pending trial.

Shortly after May's indictment, House Majority Leader Davey Hiott, R-Pickens, requested the ethics committee investigate May, citing conduct unbecoming of a member and May's business dealings with other House members.

That started the process of potentially removing May from office.

"The committee has in its disposal the opportunity upon review of the results of that investigation to determine what action is necessary — whether that's further the matter to the House floor for consideration of expulsion, or does the matter stop with the committee? That's in the hands of the committee at the next juncture," House Ethics Committee Chair Jay Jordan, R-Florence, told reporters following Tuesday's meeting.

As part of this investigation, the House Ethics Committee will hire outside attorneys to investigate, and the committee chair will have the power to issue subpoenas.

Jordan said they hope to move as quickly as possible and expect this matter will be wrapped up by the end of the calendar year.

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Oklahoma nurse accused of exchanging child sexual abuse material with SC Rep. RJ May

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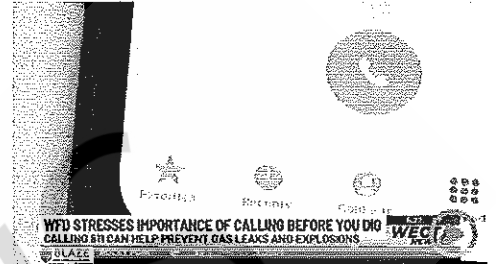
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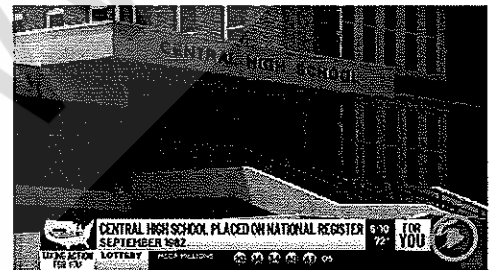
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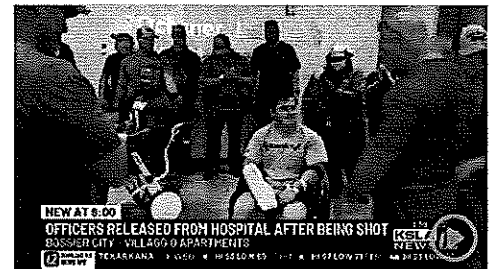
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SC House Majority Leader calls to expel Rep. facing federal sex crime charges

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Published: Jun. 12, 2025 at 9:35 AM EDT | Updated: Jun. 13, 2025 at 12:18 PM EDT



COLUMBIA, S.C. (WCSC/WIS) - Calls are now coming from inside the South Carolina State House to expel a lawmaker indicted on federal charges.

Rep. RJ May, (R – Lexington) is charged with 10 counts of distributing child sexual abuse material. Those charges carry a maximum 20-year prison sentence, with a minimum of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

South Carolina House Majority Leader Davey Hiott (R-Pickens) filed a complaint Friday with the House Ethics Committee to begin the process of having May expelled from the chamber.

Hiott said in a statement that the caucus is “deeply disturbed” by the allegations and also clarified May’s position in the separate Freedom Caucus, not with the House Republican Caucus.

“During his tenure, he has continually proven that he has no true desire to help his constituents or the people of South Carolina,” Hiott said. “His only desire to serve his own interests. This has become even more clear in the most disturbing of ways.”

Lawmakers who are convicted lose their seat, while those who are acquitted or whose charges are dismissed can be reinstated and receive back pay.

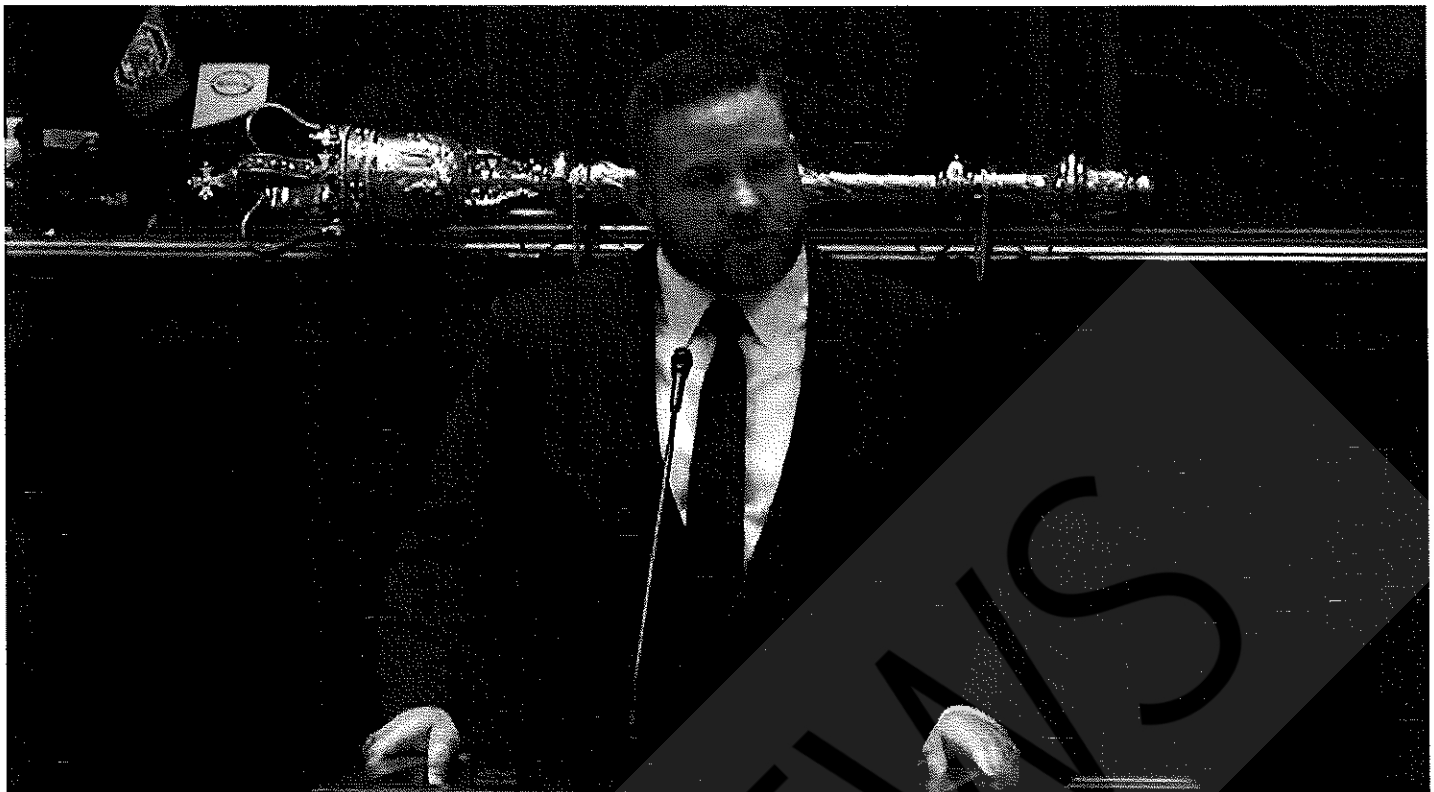
The governor does not have the power to remove members of the General Assembly from office.

Hiott also said he filed a complaint with the House Ethics Committee to further investigate May’s business dealings with lawmakers in the chamber.

Judge Shiva Hodges ordered May remain detained pending trial after a nearly two-hour arraignment and detention hearing on Thursday.

May was also suspended from his role in the South Carolina House of Representatives on Thursday via a letter penned by South Carolina House Speaker Murrell Smith.



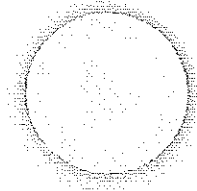


Rep. RJ May, R – Lexington, speaks during a debate in the House of Representatives chamber of the South Carolina State House in Columbia on Jan. 17, 2024 (Mary Green)

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of South Carolina, the social messaging app Kik alerted the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in April 2024 of several videos containing child sex abuse from an account with the username "joebidennnn69." Investigators found at least 10 of those videos had been shared from that account and connected it with May's mobile device and home IP address.

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The court filing was a request from the U.S. Attorney's Office, asking for more time with the evidence investigators seized, which was permitted. In it, the federal government said it had expected to criminally indict May by March of this year. It was unclear at that time what charges were expected to be brought against him or the scope and nature of the investigation.



Rep. RJ May, R – Lexington, speaks during a debate in the House of Representatives chamber of the South Carolina State House in Columbia on Jan. 17, 2024

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May, who lives in West Columbia, was first elected to his District 88 seat in the House of Representatives in 2020 and was most recently reelected to his third term last November.

He is a founding member of the hardline conservative South Carolina Freedom Caucus, which has been part of the effort to push the Republican Party in South Carolina further to the right.

The Lexington County representative spearheaded the group's strategy during its early years as it frequently clashed with members of the larger House Republican Caucus, serving as vice chair of the

the group. Later that year, they confirmed May was suspended as a member.

May was marked present every day of this year's legislative session, which began in January and ended in early May. However, the once-vocal member remained silent during debates on the House floor, largely staying seated at his back-corner desk throughout the year.

"The people of District 88 elected me to do a job, and that's what I'm here to do," May said during a House reorganizational session Dec. 3, in response to reporters' questions about the investigation and upcoming session. "The people elected me to do a job, and I'll continue to do the job I've done for the last four years."

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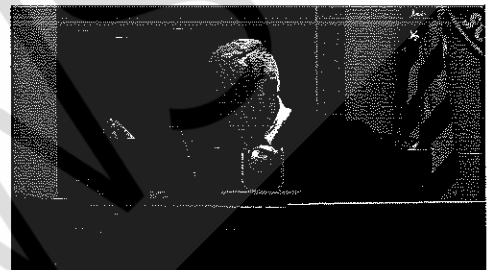
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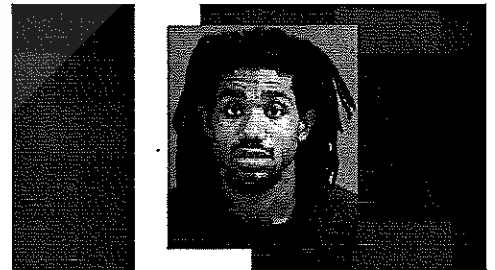
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SC House Majority Leader calls to expel Rep. facing federal sex crime charges

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By Mary Green and Michael Owens

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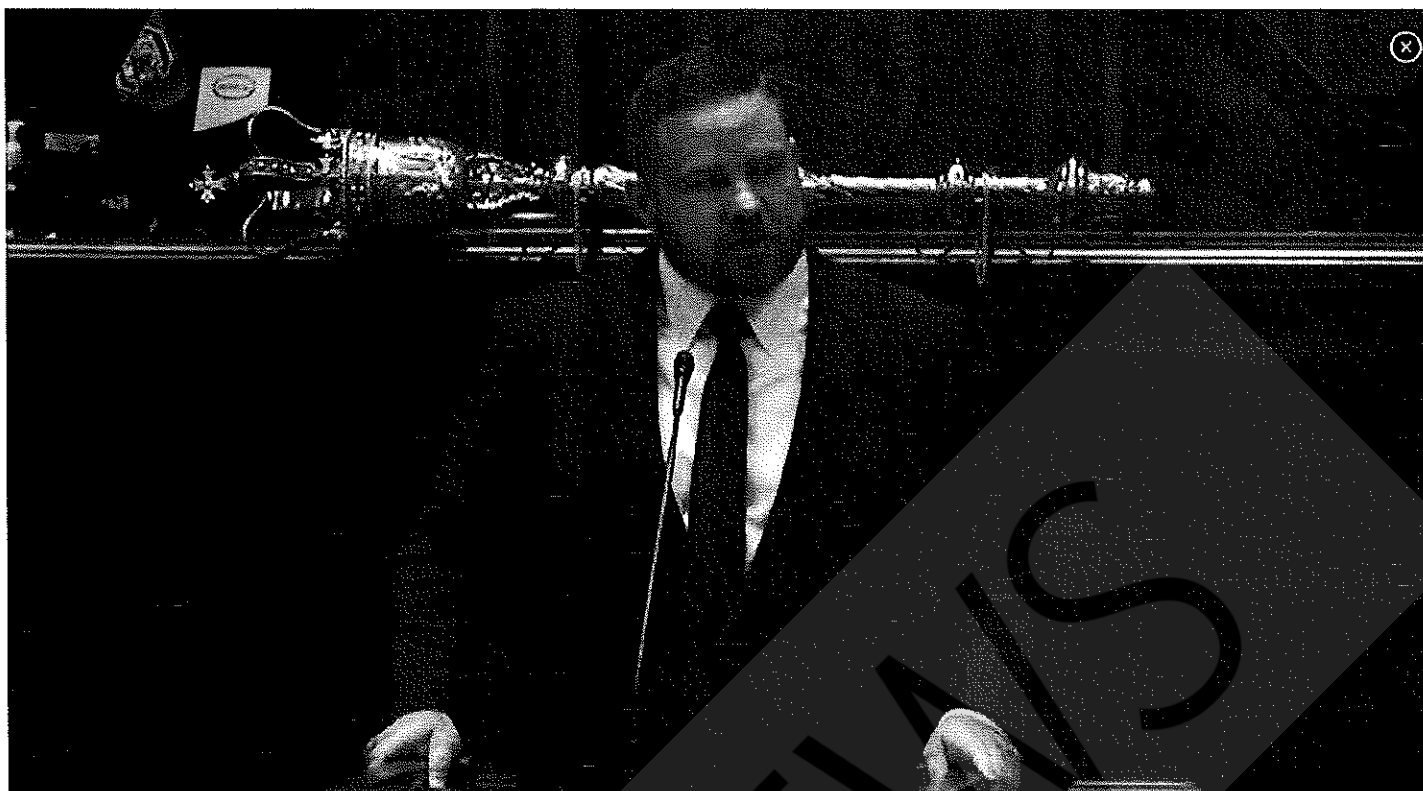
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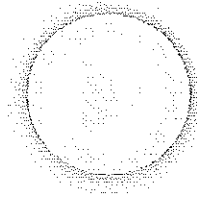


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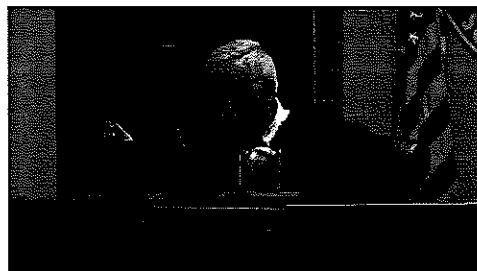
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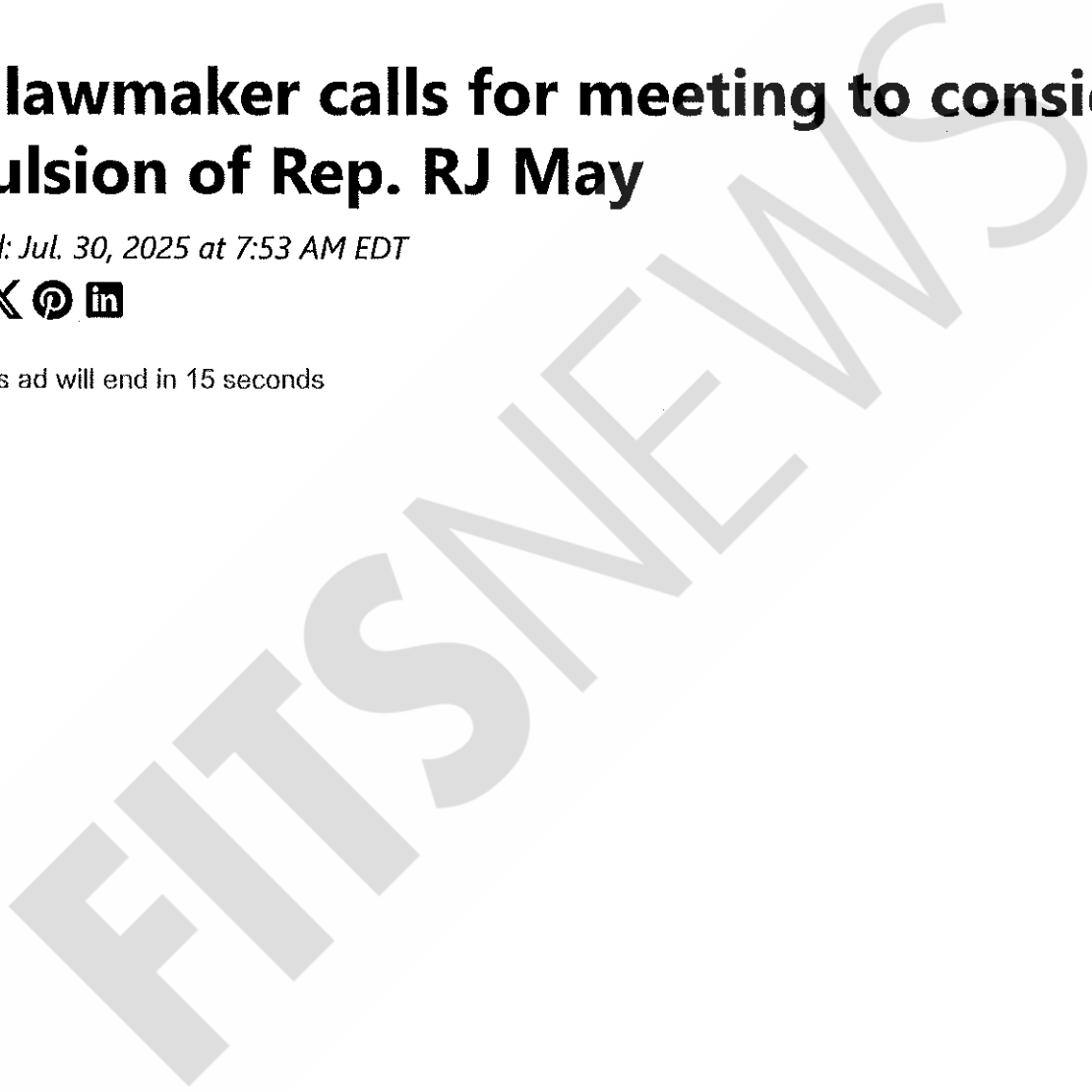
BREAKING: Judge: Charleston County magistrate facing child porn charge to stay in custody x

S.C. lawmaker calls for meeting to consider expulsion of Rep. RJ May

Published: Jul. 30, 2025 at 7:53 AM EDT



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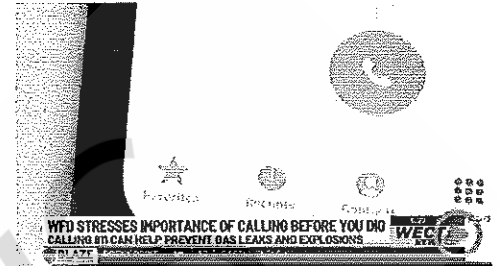
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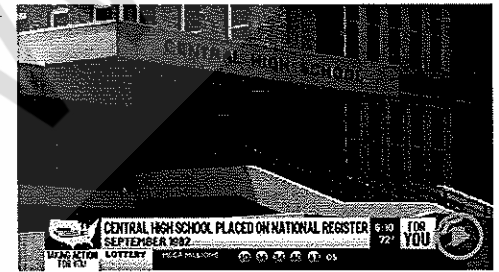
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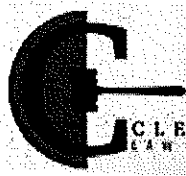


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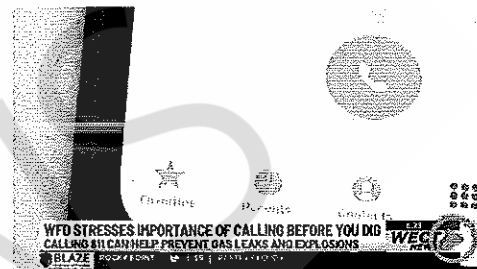
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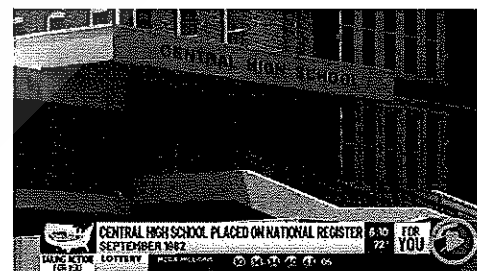
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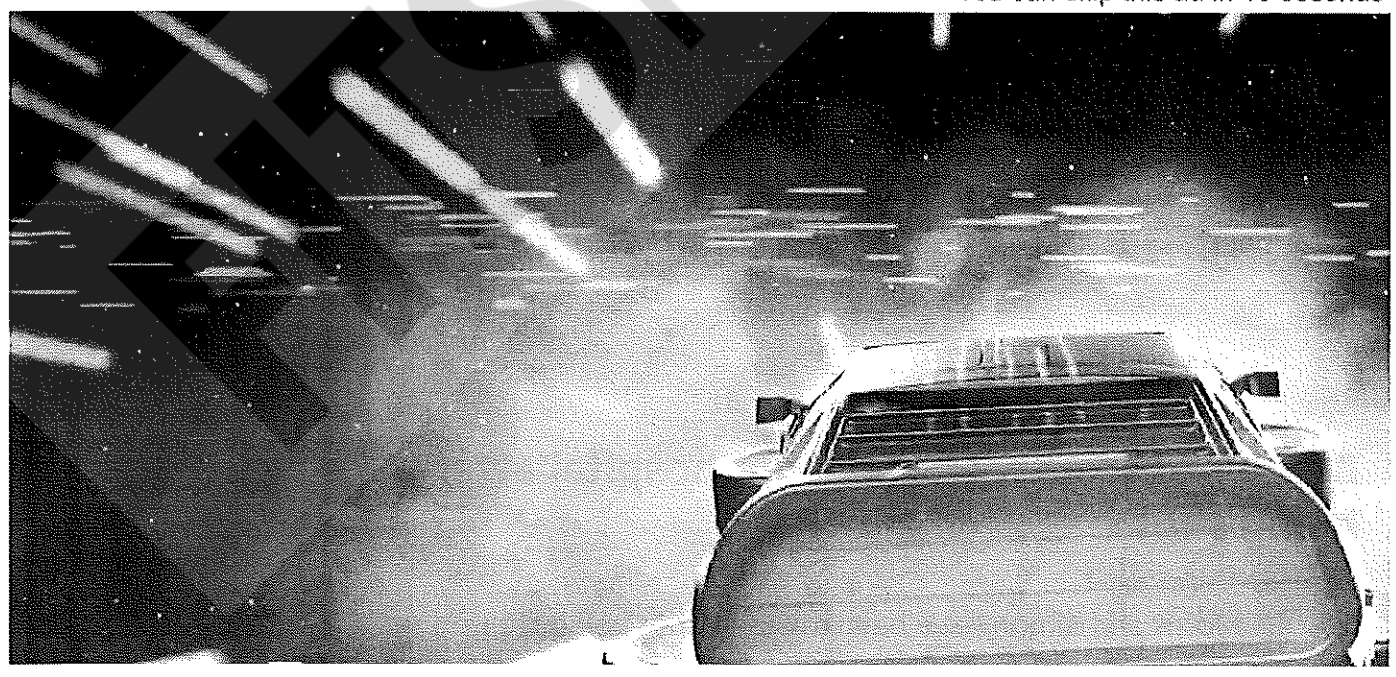
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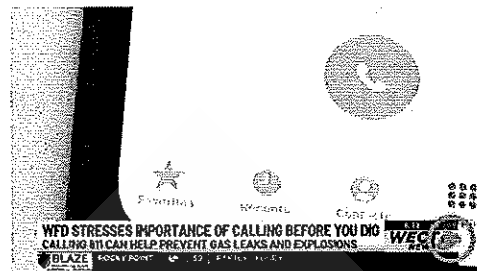


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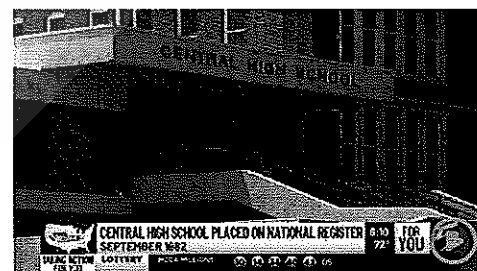
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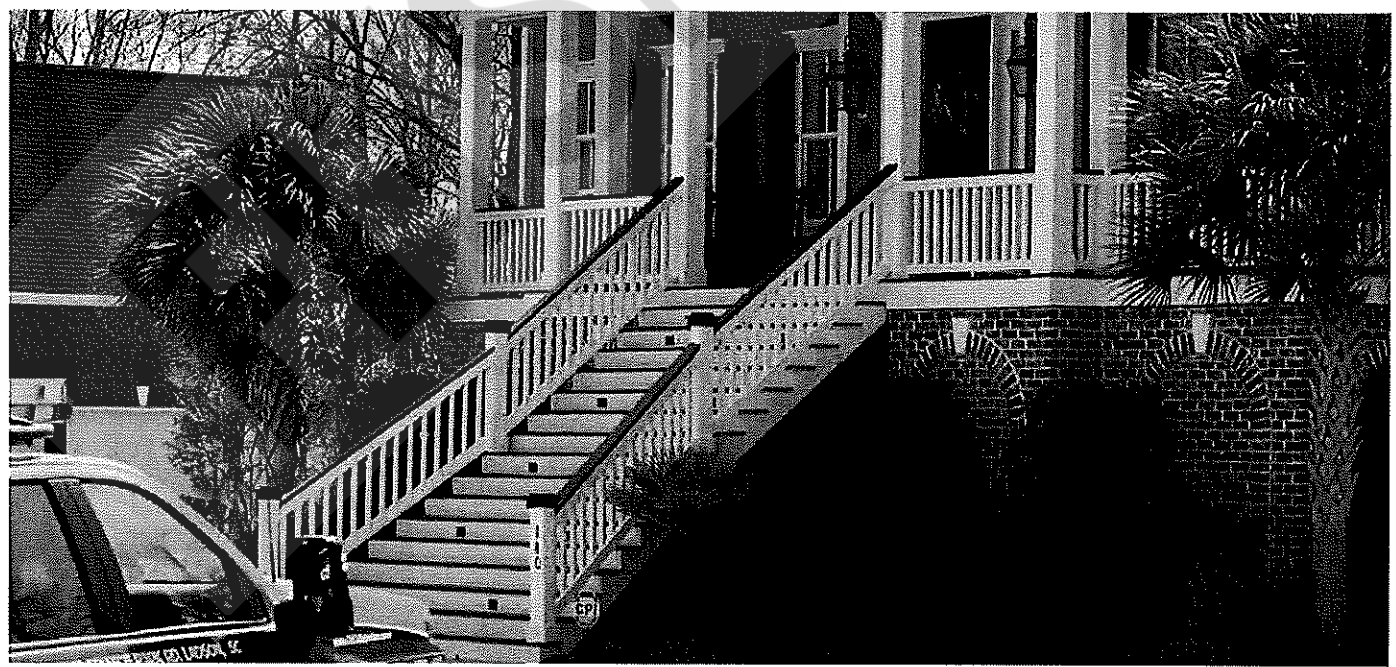


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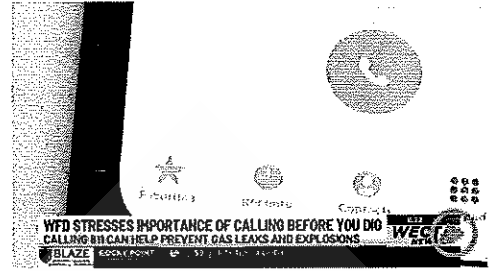


South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster commented for the first time on federal child sexual abuse material charges against SC Rep. RJ May.

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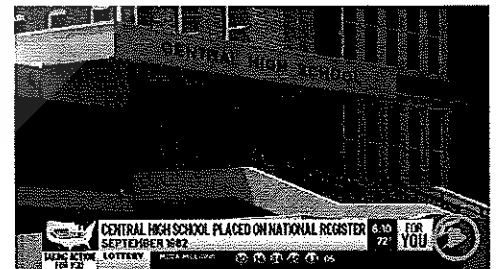
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