

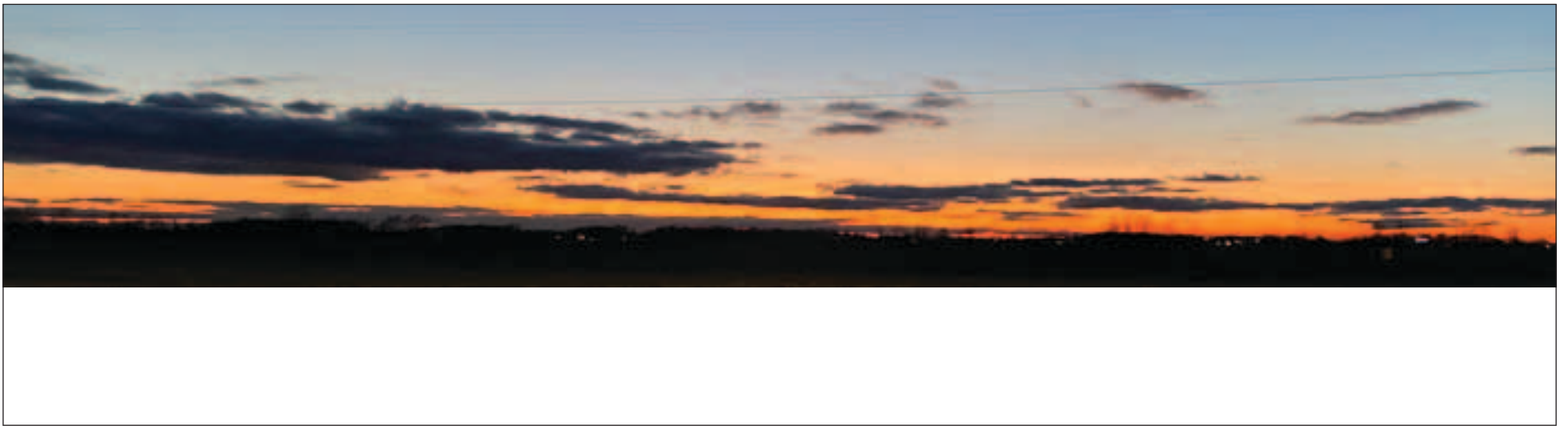
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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2023

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Sunset

The colors are vivid as the sun sets below the western horizon north of Ossian Friday night. (Photo by Dave Schultz)

Plan would speed up Indiana tax cuts, boost vouchers

By TOM DAVIES
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Speeding up planned cuts to the state's personal income tax rates and a further expansion of the private school voucher program are keys parts of a state spending plan released Friday by Indiana House Republicans.

Many of their proposals for the new two-year state budget are similar to those sought by Republican

Gov. Eric Holcomb, but the House GOP plan would accelerate tax cut and school voucher moves adopted over the last couple of years.

The House plan would boost K-12 school funding by about \$700 million, or 8.5 percent, next school year. Some \$250 million of that increase, however, would go toward raising the income limit to qualify for state money toward private school tuition.

The proposal calls for speeding

up individual income tax rate cuts approved a year ago. The current rate of 3.15 percent would go to 3.0 percent next year and 2.9 percent in 2026 — three years earlier than currently scheduled.

Budget leaders in the Republican-dominated Senate have said they want to be cautious about any tax changes with slower growth of state revenue expected in the coming years, but House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Jeff

Thompson said he believed state tax collections were solid enough to move up the rate cuts.

"We know from all the data we have that we're in a good spot to make those decreases permanent," said Thompson, a Republican from Lizton. "We believe that Hoosier taxpayers would be the best place to have those additional dollars and they can spend those most wisely and improve their situation."

Negotiations on the new budget will continue until the legislative session wraps up in late April. Neither the governor's office nor House Democrats immediately commented on the Republican proposal.

A significant departure by House Republicans from Holcomb's budget request was to scale back a major funding increase for county public health departments (Continued on Page 2)



A busy night in Bluffton

Bluffton High School was busy during its Friday night boys' basketball game against Bellmont. Above, the seventh and eighth-grade middle school boys' basketball teams were honored at halftime for winning the ACAC tournament. At left, assistant principal Stacy Morrison (right) holds up a signed Purdue men's basketball being raffled off to raise money for Riley Hospital for Children. Athletic director Steve Thompson (left) reaches into a bucket to draw the winner. The ball raised \$1,614. Bottom photo, the Bluffton High School alumni band performs on Senior Night. (Photos by Ryan Walker)



State lawmakers hear bill decriminalizing marijuana possession

By WHITNEY DOWNARD
Indiana Capital Chronicle

A bill decriminalizing the possession of two ounces, or less, of marijuana received a hearing before a House committee Wednesday but isn't expected to get additional consideration.

Rep. Wendy McNamara, R-Evansville, chairs the House courts committee and said the dialogue needed to be heard but didn't call a vote on the bill — which would have possibly advanced it to the full House Chamber.

"I've been asked why," McNamara told committee members. "The answer is: we haven't had this conversation and I think it needed to be had."

The Hoosier State a holdout for

cannabis reform

Among its peers, Indiana has been resistant to decriminalizing marijuana or legalizing it for either medicinal or recreational use. Both Kentucky and Ohio have allowed their residents to use it medicinally while Illinois and Michigan have legalized it recreationally.

Especially for those Hoosiers living close to state borders, legally obtaining the drug is no longer a challenge but Hoosiers can still face consequences in their home state.

"Indiana has an estimated \$2 billion cannabis market with no quality control standards in place," bill author Rep. Heath VanNatter, R-Kokomo, said. "While regula-

(Continued on Page 2)

Sheriff: Gunman kills 6 in rural Mississippi

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG
and EMILY
WAGSTER PETTUS
Associated Press

ARKABUTLA, Miss. (AP) — A lone gunman killed six people including his ex-wife and stepfather Friday at multiple locations in a tiny rural community in northern Mississippi, the sheriff said, leaving investigators searching for clues to what motivated the shock-rampage.

Armed with a shotgun and two handguns, 52-year-old Richard Dale Crum opened fire at about 11 a.m. and killed a man in the driver's seat of a pickup truck parked outside a convenience store

in Arkabutla, near the Tennessee state line, Tate County Sheriff Brad Lance said.

Deputies were working the crime scene when a second 911 call alerted authorities to another shooting a few miles away. After arriving at a home, they found a woman, whom the sheriff identified as Crum's ex-wife, shot dead and her current husband wounded.

Lance said deputies caught up with Crum outside his own home and arrested him. Behind the residence they found two handymen slain by gunfire — one in the road, another in an SUV. Inside a neighboring home, they discovered the

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Outside



Sunny with wind gusts today and tonight

Today	Sunday	Monday
High 45	High 51	High 47
Low 34	Low 34	Low 36

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OBITUARIES

Lorna Sherman, 89

Lorna Ilene Sherman, 89, of Fort Wayne, went to heaven Thursday, Jan. 19, 2023, at Mason's Health & Rehab in Warsaw, Ind.

Lorna was born on June 27, 1933, to Howard and Ethel (Edwards) Haddix in Grand Ledge Mich. She was married to her high-school sweetheart, Roger Sherman, for 64 years. Lorna was a registered nurse by profession, but her passion was being a mother and pastor's wife, working alongside Roger during their 34 years in ministry.

Lorna was the best mother one could have — she loved the Lord and it showed through her beautiful blue eyes and her loving attitude towards everyone. She lived out her faith in Jesus.

Lona and Roger taught their seven kids how much God loved them while they were very young, and their children consider themselves very fortunate to have had them for parents. They thank the good Lord every day that their parents are together again in heaven, at his feet, praising Him with the angels and all the Saints. What a wonderful, wonderful vision!



Lorna is survived by all her seven children, Tom (Ruby) Sherman of Naples, Idaho, Nancy (Terry) Stutzman of Warsaw, Steve (Ronda) Sherman of Albany Ore., Caroline (Jeff) Shatto of Fort Wayne, David (Amanda) Sherman of Bluffton, Suzanne Sherman of Fort Wayne, and Julia (Greg) Araya of Los Angeles; 11 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren;

four siblings residing in Michigan, Richard Haddix, Janet Thomas, Patsy (Don) Lenz, and Judy (Keith) Warner.

Lorna was preceded in death by her parents; sisters, Gerri Eno, Adilene (Don) Eckman, Virgie Hiller and Sandy (Ross) McCloud; and grandson, William Sherman.

There will be a memorial for family and friends to celebrate Lorna at 1 p.m. on March 11, 2023, at the First Congregational Church, 767 4th Ave. in Lake Odessa, Mich.

Memorials are encouraged to ProMedica Foundation, 2720 DuPont Commerce Ct. Suite 210 in Fort Wayne. Arrangements entrusted to Advantage Funeral & Cremation Services-Mungovan.

Bluffton Parks & Rec News & Notes



By Brandy Fiechter

Destination Recreation

Congratulations to Parker McCartney, age 16, for winning the snowman contest with his astronaut snowman, which received 245 votes out of 41 entries.

Tomorrow, Sunday, Feb. 19, is the **Mother-Son Nerf War and the Daddy-Daughter Dance**, and if you are freaking out that you forgot to buy tickets, don't worry, we have you covered. Tickets for both events will be available at the door for only \$7 each (exact change preferred, or checks can be made to Bluffton Parks). Tickets will go on sale 15 minutes before the event, so come a little early to get this taken care of. The Mother-Son Nerf war starts at 2 p.m., and you must bring your own nerf gun and eye protection; the Daddy Daughter Dance begins at 6 p.m.

Princess Merida cordially invites you to a **Princess Tea Party**. Join us for an enchanted day to delight in some high tea at Washington Park Pavilion, 710 S. Mulberry St., on Saturday, April 15. Party times are scheduled for 12:30 p.m. or 2:45 p.m. The day will include sipping tea, tasting cookies, meeting the brave Princess Merida, dancing, singing, a craft, and plenty of time for photos and autographs. Princess or dressy attire is appropriate. Tickets are on sale at the Clerks / Treasurers Office in City Hall (128 E. Market St.) starting Feb. 21. Youth tickets cost \$15, and adults are \$10. Parties will be sold one at a time, beginning with 12:30 p.m. followed by 2:45 p.m.

If you still need to sign-up for the **Hooked-on Crochet** class, now is your chance to register for March's lessons before they fill up. Learning to crochet will give you a lifetime of pleasure and relaxation. You can learn to create handmade items for yourself and those you love. Classes will be taught by Kathy Gehrett at City Hall (128 E Market) from 5:30-6:30 p.m. on Thursdays, March 9, 16, and 23.

The cost for three one-hour group les-

sons is \$20, due the first day. Yarn and instructions will be provided, and you will need to bring your own size H hook. Call the park office to pre-register at 824-6069 or email events@blufftonindiana.gov. Class size is limited and open to beginners and advanced students.

Patrick, the playful Leprechaun, will be traveling from park to park in Bluffton this spring, causing mischief and pulling pranks. Children of all ages are encouraged to find this mischievous leprechaun March 1-15. In this "hide and seek" game, a paper cut out of Patrick will be hidden in one of the city trails or parks. If you find the cut out of Patrick the Playful Leprechaun, you must deliver him back to the Parks Department to claim a prize. Call 824-6069 before you stop by our office on the 2nd floor of City Hall (128 E. Market) Monday-Friday between 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. so that we can have your prize waiting for you. We will then re-hide Patrick in a different location after he is found. Winners are limited to claiming the prize one time during those two weeks.

We want to thank the following for their generous donations to support the Kehoe Concert Series: Patti Troxel; Diane Humphrey; Barkley Builders, Inc; Family Ford of Bluffton; Steve & Yvette Huggins; Wells County Automotive Supply, Inc (NAPA), Brad & Michelle Baumgartner; Almco Steel Products Corp; Roembke Manufacturing & Design, Inc; Fairway Floor Covering, LLC; Habig Trucking & Excavating, Inc; CJ's Flooring, Inc; Raymond James Financial Services, Inc. Donations are still being accepted at the Wells County Foundation until March 15 if you would like to help support this series.

Parents, please remind your teens that summer applications are due on Wednesday, Feb. 22.

Have a great week!



Poster contest winners

Each year, the Wells County Soil and Water Conservation District sponsors a poster-drawing contest as part of a statewide contest in grades four and five. The winners in fourth grade were Liam Yates, first place, and Alexis Sunderman, second, Aidan Wood third. Winners for fifth grade were Cole Jackemeyer, first place, Kendra Cullar second, and Addison Dalrymple, third. Jackemeyer's poster advances to the state contest. (Photo by Glen Werling)

Former Evansville pre-k teacher charged with molesting a second student

By HOUSTON HARWOOD
Evansville Courier & Press

EVANSVILLE - A former Evansville preschool teacher accused in August of molesting a student is behind bars again after prosecutors charged him with two additional child sexual abuse offenses.

Evansville police arrested 21-year-old Joshua Brandon Leduc on Wednesday evening on charges of child seduction, a Level 3 felony, and child molesting, a Level 3 felony. Leduc formerly taught pre-kindergarten classes at Bethel United Church of Christ.

Leduc was arrested and charged with two counts of child molestation in August after he was allegedly recorded by classroom surveillance cameras sexually

assaulting a 4-year-old girl, police said.

Leduc was out on bond in that case when he was arrested Wednesday, court records show.

Bethel United Church of Christ terminated Leduc's employment Aug. 2 after it was made aware of the first allegation, lead pastor Samuel Buehrer told the Courier & Press.

More:Controversial law is at heart of threat to Evansville mayoral candidates' eligibility

According to EPD Detective Cameron Werne, a second student accused Leduc of molestation in February.

Writing in an affidavit of probable cause, Werne said the 6-year-old victim attended Bethel Buddies, the church's preschool, from August 2021 to July 2022. During a forensic inter-

view conducted at Holly's House, a victims' advocacy center in Evansville, the child reportedly said Leduc touched her inappropriately as she built a puzzle in his classroom.

According to the affidavit, the victim identified Leduc in a randomized photo lineup as the man who molested her.

EPD spokesperson Sgt. Anna Gray said detectives are not seeking out other potential victims at this time.

"They will investigate any allegations that come forward," Gray told the Courier & Press. "With these types of crimes, victims come forward once word is passed around."

This story was provided to the News-Banner by the Hoosier State Press Association's Information Network.

Second shooting this year at largest Indiana mall wounds 1

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — A male was shot Friday at an Indianapolis shopping mall in the second shooting there this year, police said.

The victim was discovered with a gunshot wound inside the Castleton Square mall, and mall security gave him medical attention before police arrived, Officer William Young, of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department, said at the scene.

"He is stable, awake and breathing," Young said. "We do not believe there are any other injuries at this time."

IMPD tweeted shortly after the shooting that "officers used a tourniquet on the victim for first aid. The suspect is no longer on scene."

The male who was shot was taken to a hospital. No additional information was immediately available about his condition. His age hasn't been disclosed.

The mall was placed on a quick lockdown moments after the shooting and later closed for the rest of the evening, Young said.

Investigators were speaking with "persons of inter-

est," Young said.

"We will be out here for some time trying to piece together what exactly occurred," he said.

The mall, on the far northeast side of Indianapolis, is the largest mall in the state of Indiana, according to its website. Mall representatives and

the mall's owner, Indianapolis-based Simon Property Group, did not immediately return calls seeking comment on the shooting.

On Jan. 3, a 16-year-old boy died and a man was hospitalized after a shooting in a parking lot outside an entrance to the mall.

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She was an agent of change. And that's a good thing.

Mick Cupp was the local United Way chairman in 1999. The board was looking for a new executive director. Pamela Beckford remembers an interview with a room full of people; perhaps the entire board. "I was terrified," she says now.

Saturday's Sub



Mark Miller

Mick and I — I was vice-chair at the time — remember an interview with her and just the two of us in a small meeting room in his real estate office. Perhaps that was a follow-up, we agreed. We do remember there were two or three finalists and that Pamela stood out.

"What I recall is her directness. A 'go get 'em' attitude," Mick says. "And she's proved that out."

I concur.

"I remember when Pamela first came to town, she hit the road running," shares Suzanne Huffman, who was the executive director of the Wells County Chamber of Commerce at the time. "Very quickly she acclimated herself with what made Bluffton and Wells County special. Even though she lived outside the county (just across the Huntington County line), she became so involved. Her passion for helping people through the United Way avenues was immediately noticed."



Mick Cupp was there at the beginning (as the board chair when Pamela Beckford was hired) and at the end (above, at Pamela's retirement reception Wednesday morning).

As noted in a separate article in Thursday's edition, Pamela has seen her share of change in her 23-plus years on the job. So have we all. There are some changes that annoy us, there are some we applaud and others in which we are the agent of change. Pamela knows all three.

Pamela led the charge in re-defining United Way's basic role in the community from simply being a collector and disbursing of funds to initiating programs and directing contributions to specific needs.

"Have you heard?" she asked excitedly during our meeting earlier this week, "Imagination Library is in the governor's budget."

Pamela is (rightfully) proud of a number of changes and initiatives during her tenure. Which one is at the top of her list is difficult to say, but this one is at least a finalist. Originated by Dolly Parton, the program provides a free book once a month for enlisted children from birth to kindergarten. It was adopted locally in 2003 and continues to receive strong local support. And now the state may kick in half the cost.

"That would be huge," Pamela continued, thinking about what else might be done with the local contributions. She noted that other states have adopted such a plan, including neighboring Ohio. The program's popularity is part of its success. "People get it that reading to children is important," she said. Last year, a special local campaign was implemented to specifically support Imagination Library. "It was successful on Day 2," she said.

While raising support for that program has gone smoothly, fundraising is easily "United Way's biggest challenge," she said. It's not a local problem. The same is true in virtually every chapter across the country.

It used to be relatively easy. Many who are reading this have done their duty — serving as the annual campaign chair. I took my turn in 2006. Pamela found my folder in her archives while cleaning out her office. The goal that year was \$300,000; according to a clipping in the folder, we called it a day at \$280,000. Former Mayor Ted Ellis preceded me as campaign chair. He met his goal and never let me forget it. But I digress. The point is, Ted and I both recognized that the task was becoming more difficult.

The annual budget these days is at about \$200,000. Payroll deduction campaigns were an important part of those efforts and still are, but there are fewer companies that do that. Part of the reason is "it can be difficult to get in the door," she said. "If we don't have a 'champion' — a United Way advocate — inside the building, it's tough."

"They also say they can't find the time but I can help them do that," she shared. "Just give me two minutes. You'd be surprised what I can say in two minutes."

Well, some might be surprised, but not I. I've seen her in action. We would be remiss to not mention her role in the creation of the Wells County Leadership Academy, as detailed in that Thursday article. The trio of Suzanne Huffman, Pamela and Wells County Foundation executive director Tammy Slater was an unstoppable force.

However, it may be the recognition of her United Way peers that has been most satisfying. (As reported Thursday, she was chosen to serve on the nationwide "Network Advisory Council.") "To be elected to this council of just 30 people," she shares, "and to do some strategic planning and thinking with all of them." It was an experience and "honor" she greatly enjoyed.

In those discussions, they realized that just under half of all the United Way offices in the country have a staff of two or less, "and I was the only one who represented those. So I ended up representing about one-half of the network — not half of the dollars but half of the offices."

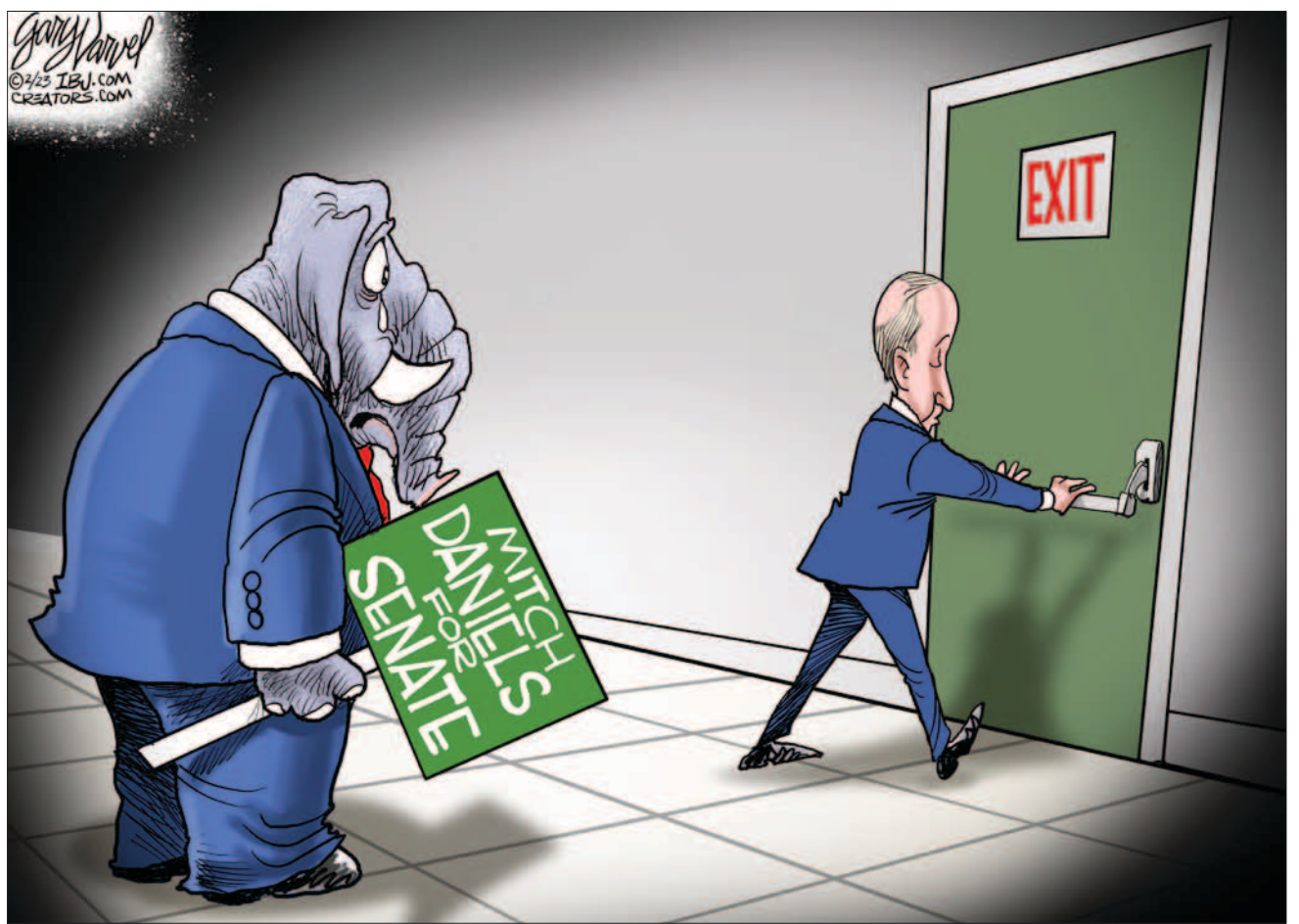
"Wells County is a better place because of Pamela," current United Way board chair Doug Brown intones. "She is leaving big shoes to fill."

"Her passion for early childhood education has helped hundreds of Wells County children," Suzanne Huffman shares. "Her replacement has very big shoes to fill."

Hmm. Seems to be a pattern developing. "I have enjoyed having the opportunity to build a relationship with Pamela both professionally and personally over the years," adds Tammy Slater. "I wish her the best in retirement."

I concur.

miller@news-banner.com



MAGA world attack on Mitch Daniels is an early GOP alarm bell for 2024

Here we go again.

In 2022, Republicans blew a historic opportunity to take back the Senate because, in state after state, they nominated extreme candidates whose only qualification was fealty to former president Donald Trump.

While positive, forward-looking conservative reformers such as Govs. Ron DeSantis (Fla.), Mike DeWine (Ohio), Chris Sununu (N.H.) and Brian Kemp (Ga.) trounced their Democratic opponents, MAGA Senate candidates including Herschel Walker (Ga.), Mehmet Oz (Pa.), Don Bolduc (N.H.) and Blake Masters (Ariz.) lost winnable races. Voters' message could not have been clearer.

So, Republicans learned their lesson, right? Apparently not.

When former Indiana governor Mitch Daniels (R) announced he was exploring a 2024 bid to succeed Sen. Mike Braun (R), who is running for governor, Republicans should have been elated. Daniels (a Post Opinions contributing columnist) was a whirlwind of reform in the governor's mansion. He ended collective bargaining for state employees, privatized Indiana's toll road, established one of the country's largest school choice program for low-income students and created a conservative alternative to Medicaid that gave citizens more control over their health-care choices. He inherited a \$700 million deficit but left the state with a \$2 billion budget surplus — achieved while he implemented the biggest tax cut in Indiana history. Then, as president of Purdue University, he earned a reputation as the United States' most innovative college president. Daniels rejected vaccine mandates and covid lockdowns, replaced full-time dining hall employees with student workers, scrapped the vast fleet of university-owned buses in favor of a private contractor and froze tuition for 10 years.

In other words, Daniels is exactly the kind of bold, thoughtful conservative reformer voters flocked to in 2022. And he was well positioned to win the GOP nomination. A December poll showed him leading Rep. Jim Banks — a Trump loyalist who voted against certifying Joe Biden's election — by 22 points.

Then came the RINO hunters. The Club for Growth released an ad excoriating Daniels as a tax-and-spend "old-guard Republican clinging to the old ways of the bad old days." Donald Trump Jr. tweeted "The establishment is trying to recruit weak RINO Mitch Daniels" to run for Senate, adding that "he would be Mitt Romney 2.0."

It worked. Like Republican Govs. Doug Ducey (Ariz.) and Sununu — who both declined Senate runs in 2022 rather than face a barrage of MAGA hate — Daniels decided that life is too short to spend the next two years fending off attacks and distortions of his record from the right. He opted not to run.

If Ducey and Sununu had been their state's Senate nominees in 2022, instead of Masters and Bolduc, the GOP would probably hold the majority today. Indiana

is probably red enough that Banks can win — much as J.D. Vance won in Ohio by six points, despite running on the same ballot as DeWine, who won by 25.

But the anti-Daniels campaign should set off early warning signals: MAGA world is not chastened by its disastrous failures in 2022. And if they are allowed to drive candidates like Daniels out of races across the country, the GOP will jeopardize its best chance in a generation to take back the Senate.

In 2024, Democrats will be defending 23 seats, including three in Trump-won states (Montana, Ohio and West Virginia) and five (Arizona, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin) that Biden won by five points or less. Meanwhile, Republicans will be defending 10 seats, none of which are in Biden-won states and one (Florida) in a state where DeSantis won reelection by nearly 20 points last year. The Senate is the GOP's for the taking in 2024 — provided Republicans learn from their 2022 mistakes.

In Arizona, two 2022 losers, Masters and Trump-backed gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake, are reportedly considering Senate runs. In Montana, Rep. Matthew M. Rosendale — one of the last holdouts opposing Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) for House speaker — is reportedly considering challenging Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.), to whom Rosendale lost in 2018.

In Michigan, former congressman Peter Meijer would be a strong Senate candidate — but he was targeted by Trump in last year's GOP primary after voting to impeach. Meijer lost the nomination to Trump-backed John Gibbs, who went on to lose a perfectly winnable GOP House seat. It's doubtful Trump would let bygones be bygones.

In West Virginia, Trump loyalist Rep. Alex Mooney, who voted against certifying the 2020 election results, has declared he will challenge Sen. Joe Manchin III (D). Republican leaders are working to recruit Gov. Jim Justice (R). A poll commissioned by the Sen. Mitch McConnell-aligned Senate Leadership Fund shows Mooney losing to Manchin 55-40, while predicting Justice defeating him 52-42.

The new chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, Sen. Steve Daines (Mont.), is wisely not leaving things to chance (in contrast to his disastrous predecessor, Sen. Rick Scott of Florida) and has pledged to get involved in contested primaries. "Republicans are sick of losing," Daines says. "We want to make sure we have candidates that can win general elections."

He's 100 percent correct. As 2022 showed, losing just a couple of winnable races is all it takes to cost Republicans the Senate majority. The GOP needs candidates who can win general elections — candidates such as Mitch Daniels.

Marc A. Thiessen is on Twitter, @marcthiessen.



Marc Thiessen

Proposed bail amendment merits serious deliberation

Do we really need an amendment to the state constitution to ensure that people who represent a threat to public safety stay locked away in jail?

Sen. Eric Koch, a Republican from Bedford, believes the answer is yes. He's the sponsor of Senate Joint Resolution 1, a measure designed to make it easier for judges to deny bail to suspects they believe pose a substantial risk to the public.

Proponents say the legislation would keep dangerous people off the streets, but critics say the measure's subjectivity could endanger the rights of people who might indeed be innocent of the charges they face.

Under current Indiana law, only people accused of murder or treason can be denied bail, meaning judges have no choice but to set bail for those charged with any other crime.

"But if they set that bail too high, the Indiana Supreme Court has ruled that could be considered an unconstitutional, de facto denial of bail," Koch told reporters.

His proposed amendment would

allow judges to deny bail in cases where the suspect posed a threat to public safety.

The Indiana Capital Chronicle asked Koch how he could ensure the new law would be applied consistently.

"We're relying on and trusting the good discretion of our trial court judges, who will make those decisions on a case-by-case basis," he responded.

Critics, though, believe the change simply isn't needed.

Bernice Corley, executive director of the Indiana Public Defender Council, worries that SJR 1 might lead judges to deny bail to people accused of low-level crimes.

"From my point of view, we already do a great job, in a negative way, of keeping people detained pre-trial," she told the Capital Chronicle.

"I think this language just gives comfort to what was already being done. And ... it broadens the catchment of people who could be caught up."

Civil liberties advocates will tell you the vast majority of inmates sit-

ting in county jails are people waiting for their day in court. Bail advocates remind us that until convicted, these folks should be presumed innocent.

They might be mental health patients who should be getting help rather than languishing in jail.

Koch's measure passed the Senate by a vote of 34-15, and it is now pending in the House Committee on Courts and Criminal Code.

If it clears the committee and passes the full House, the measure is still a long way from becoming law.

A constitutional amendment must pass both houses of the General Assembly twice with an election in between. That means if the resolution passes this year or next, it would still need the approval of the lawmakers chosen in the election next fall.

Then, it would go on the ballot where voters would have to approve it in a referendum, likely in 2026.

That's appropriate. Changing our state constitution is a significant step, especially when it applies to the rights of private citizens.

Such a change requires much thought and deliberation. It should never be taken lightly.

Anderson Herald Bulletin

5 Memphis officers plead not guilty in death of Tyre Nichols

By **ADRIAN SAINZ** and **JONATHAN MATTISE**
Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Five former Memphis police officers pleaded not guilty Friday to second-degree murder and other charges in the violent arrest and death of Tyre Nichols, with his mother saying afterward that none of them would look her in the eye in court.

Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Desmond Mills Jr., Emmitt Martin III and Justin Smith made their first court appearances with their lawyers before a judge in Shelby County Criminal Court. The officers were fired after an internal police investigation into the Jan. 7 arrest of Nichols, who died in a hospital three days later. His beating was caught on video.

At a news conference after the hearing, Nichols' mother, RowVaughn Wells, said the officers didn't have the courage to look her in the eye, but "they're going to see me at every court date — every one — until we get justice for my son."

"I feel very numb right now," Wells said. "And I'm waiting for this nightmare basically that I'm going through right now, I'm waiting for somebody to wake me up. I know that's not going to happen."

The officers pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder, aggravated assault, aggravated kidnapping, official misconduct and official oppression. They are all out on bond. Their next hearing is scheduled for May 1.

The Nichols case is the latest to prompt nationwide protests and renew an intense public discussion about police brutality. Nichols, 29, was Black. All five officers charged in his death also are Black.

Addressing the courtroom, Judge James Jones Jr. asked for patience and civility, stressing that "this case can take some time."

"Everyone involved wants this case to be concluded as quickly as possible," Jones said. "But it's important for you all to understand that the state of Tennessee, as well as each

one of these defendants, have an absolute right to a fair trial."

Bean's attorney, John Keith Perry, spoke with reporters afterward, saying Bean was doing his job and asserting multiple times that the officer "never struck" Nichols.

"Tadarrius Bean never touched him (Nichols) in any way, striking him. Period," Perry said.

That claim is contradicted by video footage and Bean's own words.

Bean admitted to police investigators he punched Nichols two or three times in the face because officers weren't able to handcuff Nichols. The admission was noted in a filing by the Memphis Police Department seeking to prohibit Bean from working in law enforcement again. The filing notes Bean's actions were captured on video.

Bean admitted to throwing the punches during a type of internal investigation that, for legal reasons, will likely never be seen by a jury.

Bean also held Nichols

by one of his arms while Nichols was pepper-sprayed, kicked, punched and beaten with a baton.

As Bean's attorney spoke with reporters, protester Casio Montez spoke over him, saying Nichols' death was murder: "You represent a murderer, bro."

Blake Ballin, the attorney for Mills, said the process must be "based on the facts and the law, and not the raw emotions that our country is experiencing."

The nation's grief over Nichols' death "absolutely should be channeled into demanding change in the way that we police our communities," he added.

"Let's not forget that my client is a Black man in a courtroom in America," Ballin said.

Lawyers for Martin and Smith did not immediately respond to attempts for comment. Haley's lawyer declined to comment in an email.

Assistant District Attorney Paul Hagerman told reporters that "Memphis and the whole world needs to

see that what's right is done in this case, and it needs to happen sooner rather than later."

Nichols' stepfather, Rodney Wells, was in court alongside Nichols' mother and their lawyer, civil rights attorney Ben Crump.

"This is a glorious day," Rodney Wells said at the post-hearing news conference. "This is the beginning of the process."

Nichols was stopped by police for an alleged traffic violation and was pulled out of his car by officers who used profanity, with at least one brandishing a gun. An officer hit Nichols with a stun gun, but Nichols ran away toward his nearby home, according to video footage released by the city.

The officers, part of a crime-suppression team known as Scorpion, caught up with Nichols and punched him, kicked him and slugged him with a baton as he yelled for his mother.

After the beating, officers stood by and talked with one another as Nichols strug-

gled with his injuries on the ground, video showed. One officer took photos of Nichols as he was propped up against an unmarked police car, video and records showed.

Erica Williams, the district attorney's office spokesperson, told The Associated Press in a text message Friday that "investigators are aware of photos sent from Haley's phone and have identified the recipients of the photos."

Nichols was taken to a hospital in an ambulance that left the site of the beating 27 minutes after emergency medical technicians arrived, authorities said.

One other white officer who was involved in the initial traffic stop has been fired. An additional officer who has not been identified has been suspended.

Three Memphis Fire Department employees who were present at the site of the arrest have been fired. Two Shelby County sheriff's deputies who also were there have been suspended without pay.

Meat plant cleaning service fined \$1.5M for hiring minors

By **STEVE KARNOWSKI**
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — One of the country's largest cleaning services for food processing companies employed more than 100 children in dangerous jobs at 13 meatpacking plants across the country, the U.S. Department of Labor said Friday as it announced over \$1.5 million in civil penalties.

The investigation into Packers Sanitation Services Inc., or PSSI, began last summer. Department officials searched three meatpacking plants owned by JBS USA and Turkey Valley Farms in Nebraska and Minnesota, and found 31 underage workers as young as 13. They also searched PSSI's headquarters in Kieler, Wisconsin. Underage workers were found at plants in eight states.

The department went

to review records for 55 locations where PSSI provided cleaning services and found even more violations, involving children ages 13 to 17. The agency obtained a temporary restraining order in November and a permanent injunction in December, when PSSI entered into a consent judgment that committed the company to no longer employ minors illegally.

Over the past three years, children were found to be using caustic cleaning chemicals and cleaning "dangerous power-driven equipment, like skull-splitters and razor-sharp bone saws," Jessica Looman, principal deputy administrator of the department's Wage and Hour Division, told reporters.

At least three of those minors, including a 13-year-old, suffered burns from the chemicals used for cleaning at the JBS plant in Grand

Island, Nebraska, officials said.

Some of the children worked overnight shifts and were also enrolled in schools during the day, department spokeswoman Rhonda Burke said in an email.

The fine PSSI paid on Thursday, \$15,138 for each minor, is the maximum allowed under federal law. But investigators believe the company actually employed many more than the 102 children they verified. Under the consent judgment, Looman said, PSSI must identify and remove them from dangerous work.

"Make no mistake, this is no clerical error, or actions of rogue individuals or bad managers," Looman said. "These findings represent a systemic failure across PSSI's entire organization to ensure that children were not working in violation of the law. PSSI's sys-

tems in many cases flagged that these children were too young to work, and yet they were still employed at these facilities."

The company's vice president of marketing, Gina Swenson, said in a statement Friday that the company has "a zero-tolerance policy against employing anyone under the age of 18."

As soon as PSSI became aware of the allegations, she said, it conducted audits and hired an outside law firm to help strengthen its policies. PSSI has also conducted additional training for hiring managers, including on spotting identity theft, she said.

None of the minors identified by federal investigators still work for PSSI, and the Department of Labor

"has also not identified any managers aware of improper conduct that are currently employed" by the company, Swenson added.

PSSI has said it employs about 17,000 people working at more than 700 locations nationwide, making it one of the largest food-processing-plant cleaning companies.

The 13 plants where violations were found were in Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Tennessee and Texas. The ones with the most violations were the JBS plant in Grand Island, Nebraska, where PSSI employed 27 minors; the Cargill plant in Dodge City, Kansas, where 26 children worked; and a JBS plant in Worthington, Minnesota, where 22 minors worked.

The Labor Department also searched a Tyson facility in Sedalia, Missouri, but found no verifiable violations there.

The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, which represents meatpacking plant workers, called PSSI "one of the worst actors" in the industry.

"Paying a simple fine is not enough, their entire business model relies on the exploitation of workers, vicious union-busting tactics, and the violation of human rights," Marc Perrone, the union's international president, said in a statement. He called on the meatpacking industry to use its power over contractors like PSSI to end the exploitation of children for good.

Military finishes recovering Chinese balloon debris

By **TARA COPP** and **LÓLITA C. BALDOR**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. has finished efforts to recover the remnants of the large balloon that was shot down off the coast of South Carolina, and analysis of the debris so far reinforces conclusions that it was a Chinese spy balloon, U.S. officials said Friday.

Officials said the U.S. believes that Navy, Coast Guard and FBI personnel collected all of the balloon debris off the ocean floor, which included key equipment from the payload that could reveal what information it was able to monitor and collect. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said a significant amount of debris was recovered and it included "electronics and optics" from the payload. He declined to say what, if anything, the U.S. has learned from the wreckage so far.

U.S. Northern Command said in a statement that the recovery operations ended Thursday and the final pieces are on their way to the FBI lab in Virginia for analysis. It said air and maritime restrictions off South Carolina have been lifted.

The announcement capped three dramatic weeks that saw U.S. fighter jets shoot down four airborne objects — the large Chinese balloon on Feb. 4 and three much smaller objects about a week later over Canada, Alaska and Lake Huron. They are the first known peacetime shootdowns of unauthorized objects in U.S. airspace.

The officials also said the search for the small airborne object that was shot

down over Lake Huron has stopped, and nothing has been recovered. U.S. officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations. The U.S. and Canada have also failed to recover any debris so far from the other two objects which were shot down over the Yukon and northern Alaska.

While the military is confident the balloon shot down off South Carolina was a surveillance airship operated by China, the Biden administration has admitted that the three smaller objects were likely civilian-owned balloons that were targeted during the heightened response, after U.S. homeland defense

radars were recalibrated to detect slower moving airborne items.

Due to their small size and the remote areas where they were shot down, officials acknowledge that recovering any debris is difficult and probably unlikely. Those last two searches, however, have not been formally called off.

Much of the Chinese balloon fell into about 50 feet of water, and the Navy was able to collect remnants floating on the surface, and divers and unmanned naval vessels pulled up the rest from the bottom of the ocean. Northern Command said Friday that all of the Navy and Coast Guard ships have left the area.

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Local Roundup

County Election Board will meet Tuesday afternoon

The Wells County Election Board will meet at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, in the clerk's office in the Wells County Courthouse, 102 W. Market St.

- Topics on the agenda include:
- Commissioner's appointment of the Harrison Township board member.
 - A resignation letter from Mick Jackson.
 - A sample ballot for the 2023 municipal primary election.
 - A resolution establishing dates and hours for in-person absentee voting.

Solid Waste District board to meet Tuesday afternoon

The board of the Wells County Solid Waste District will meet at 4 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, in Room 105, the multi-purpose room on the lower level of the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St.

- Topics on the agenda include:
- Financial matters.
 - A confidential shredding agreement.
 - NuGenesis agreement.
 - Ossian shredding event.
 - Supervisor's report.
 - 2023 advertising.

Bluffton Board of Works to meet Tuesday afternoon

The Bluffton Board of Public Works and Safety will meet at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, in the Council Chambers on the second floor of City Hall, 128 E. Market St.

Topics on the agenda include a water adjustment request and personnel matters brought to the board by Clerk-Treasurer Tami Runyon, Fire Chief Don Craig, and Mayor John Whicker.

County Drainage Board will meet Tuesday afternoon

The Wells County Drainage Board will meet at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, in Room 105, the multi-purpose room on the lower level of the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St.

Topics on the agenda include the setting of a hearing date for a proposed maintenance assessment increase in the Bills Creek watershed in Harrison and Liberty townships, plus project updates and a discussion of miscellaneous drainage matters.

County Commissioners will meet Tuesday afternoon

The Wells County Commissioners will meet at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, in Room 105, the multi-purpose room on the lower level of the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St.

- Topics on the agenda include:
- Discussion of financial matters.
 - Appointments with Wells County Sheriff Scott Holliday, Wells County Highway Supervisor Shawn Bonar (who will present a truck acquisition resolution), and Wells County Engineer Nate Rumschlag.
 - Discussion of a preliminary engineering services agreement for railroad coordination on Wells County Road 200N.
 - Bridge 54 agreement.

Local Roads and Bridges matching grant agreement.

- Tourism Commission board appointments, brought to the board by Chad Kline.
- Road use and decommissioning agreement.
- Council on Aging 4th Quarter 2022 invoice.
- Jail Status query.
- Right-of-way and utility agreement(s).

An executive session will be held immediately after the conclusion of the regular session. During the executive session, which will be closed to the public, the commissioners will discuss the initiation of litigation or litigation that is either pending or has been threatened specifically in writing.

Southern Wells school board will meet Tuesday

The board of the Southern Wells Community Schools will meet at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, in the high school media center of the SWCS campus.

- Topics on the agenda include:
- Spotlight on Raider success.
 - Public comments.
 - Financial considerations.
 - Acceptance of donations.
 - Generator, bathroom fixtures, preschool room renovation, and internet service/erate.
 - Personnel matters — Certified and classified employees, extra-curricular activities personnel, administrator contracts, and retroactive pay for administrators.
 - Discussion of lice policy, classified handbook, Return to Learn, and public com-

ment policy.

- First reading of board policies.
- Conference and field trip requests.
- Superintendent's information.

An executive session will be held at 4:30 p.m. prior to the regular meeting. No information was available as to the topic of the executive session, which will be closed to the public.

Also, before the regular meeting, the board will hold a work session on financial considerations and consideration of policies.

Bluffton Common Council will meet Tuesday evening

The Bluffton Common Council will meet at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, in the Council Chambers on the second floor of City Hall, 128 E. Market St.

- Topics on the agenda include:
- A presentation by the First Bank of Berne.
 - A discussion brought to the council by residents of the Hi-Lo area concerning Praxis.
 - Consideration of Additional Appropriation Ordinance 1584.

PSAP advisory board will meet Wednesday morning

The Public Safety Answering Point advisory board will meet at 8 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 22, in Room 105, the multi-purpose room on the lower level of the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St.

The chief item on the agenda is the director's report.

Brazil's Carnival finally reborn in full form after pandemic

By MAURICIO SAVARESE and DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil's Carnival is back.

Glittery and outrageous costumes were prepared again. Samba songs were ringing out 'til dawn at Rio de Janeiro's sold-out parade grounds. Hundreds of raucous, roaming parties were flooding the streets. And working-class communities were buoyed, emotionally and economically, by the renewed revelry.

The COVID-19 pandemic last year prompted Rio to delay Carnival by two months, and watered down some of the fun, which was attended mostly by locals. Brazil's federal government expects 46 million people to join the festivities that officially began Friday and run through Feb. 22. That includes visitors to cities that make Carnival a world-famous bash, especially Rio but also Salvador, Recife and metropolitan Sao Paulo, which has recently emerged as a hotspot.

These cities have already begun letting loose.

Many Brazilian mayors, including Rio's, were marking the start of the celebrations on Friday by symbolically handing the keys to their cities to their Carnival Kings. And the first street parties of the Carnival weekend kicked off, with revelers' costumes ranging from Pope Francis to the devil himself.

"We've waited for so long, we deserve this catharsis," Thiago Varela,

a 38-year-old engineer wearing a Hawaiian shirt drenched by the rain, said at a bash in Sao Paulo.

Most tourists were eager to go to the street parties, known as blocos. Rio has permitted more than 600 of them, and there are more unsanctioned blocos. The biggest blocos lure millions to the streets, including one bloco that plays Beatles songs with a Carnival rhythm for a crowd of hundreds of thousands. Such major blocos were called off last year.

"We want to see the partying, the colors, the people and ourselves enjoying Carnival," Chilean tourist Sofia Umaña, 28, said near Copacabana beach.

The premier spectacle is at the Sambadrome. Top samba schools, which are based in Rio's more working-class neighborhoods, spend millions on hour-long parades with elaborate floats and costumes, said Jorge Perlingeiro, president of Rio's league of samba schools.

"What's good and beautiful costs a lot; Carnival materials are expensive," Perlingeiro said in an interview in his office beside the samba schools' warehouses. "It's such an important party ... It's a party of culture, happiness, entertainment, leisure and, primarily, its commercial and social side."

He added that this year's Carnival will smash records at the Sambadrome, where some 100,000 staff and spectators are expected each day in the sold-out venue,

plus 18,000 paraders. While President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is not expected to be among them, his wife Rosângela da Silva has said she will be at the parade.

The first lady's attendance signals a shift from the administration of former President Jair Bolsonaro, who kept his distance from the nation's marquee cultural event.

Nearly 700,000 Brazilians died in the pandemic, the world's second-highest national total, after the U.S., and many blamed Bolsonaro's response, weakening the bid for reelection that he ultimately lost. Many at this year's street parties are celebrating not just the return of Carnival, but also Bolsonaro's defeat.

That was the case at the Heaven on Earth street party in Rio's bohemian Santa Teresa neighborhood on Feb. 11. Musicians pounded their drums as some revelers climbed fences to watch the scene from above the pulsing throng. Anilson Costa, a stilt-walker, already had a prime view from his elevated perch. Covered in flowers and brightly colored pom-poms, he poured a watering can labeled "LOVE" over people dancing below him.

"Seeing this crowd today is a dream, it's very magical," said Costa. "This is the post-pandemic Carnival, the Carnival of democracy, the Carnival of rebirth."

This year shares some of the spirit of the 1919 edition, which took place right after Spanish influenza killed tens of thousands

of Brazilians, but was no longer a significant threat. WWI had just ended, too, and people were eager to unburden themselves, said David Butter, the author of a book about that year's celebration.

"There were so many people in Rio's city center for Carnival that the whole region ran out of water within hours," said Butter.

Carnival's cancellation in 2021 and its lower-key version last year pummeled an industry that is a nearly year-long source of jobs for carpenters, welders, sculptors, electricians, dancers, choreographers and every-

one else involved in bringing parades to the public. As such, Carnival's full-fledged return is a shot in the arm for local economies.

"Yesterday, I went to sleep at 3 in the morning. Today, I'll leave earlier, because I've lost my voice," said seamstress Luciene Moreira, 60, as she sewed a yellow costume in samba school Salgueiro's warehouse. "You have to sleep later one day, earlier the next; otherwise, the body can't handle it. But it is very enjoyable!"

Rio expects some 5 billion reais (about \$1 billion) in revenue at its bars, hotels

and restaurants, the president of the city's tourism agency, Ronnie Costa, told the AP. Rio's hotels are at 85 percent capacity, according to Brazil's hotel association, which expects last-minute deals to bring that figure near to its max. Small businesses are benefiting, too.

"Carnival is beautiful, people are buying, thank God all my employees are paid up to date," said Jorge Francisco, who sells sequined and sparkled Carnival accoutrements at his shop in downtown Rio. "For me, this is an immense joy, everyone smiling and wanting. That's how Carnival is."

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My family's turned their backs on me

Dear Annie: My biological family wants nothing to do with me or my new wife. Our story is long. My sons, their wives and children are all very mad at me for saying and doing a few things they didn't like.

gone until late, comes home and goes to bed. I have moved in with my sister because I need proper care post-procedure, and all he had to say about it was that my family is controlling me.

Dear Annie by Annie Lane



Dear Forgotten Father: While you don't specify what actions have incited this domino effect, there's no doubt that turmoil among family members is potentially a tragedy.

Dear Lost Footing: Instead of working to regain your trust and prove he's capable of change, your husband has taken your graciousness for granted.

Whether it's through a text, phone call, letter or face-to-face conversation, assure your loved ones that you'll always be there for them, willing to talk whenever they are.

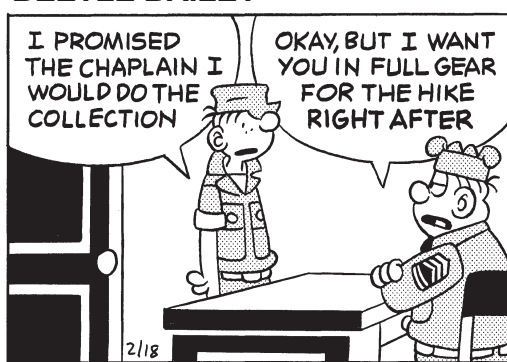
If you're willing to give things another shot, see if your husband would be open to attending marriage counseling. The issues you're currently facing run deeper than here and now.

Dear Annie: I've been married to my husband for five years. We have been together for over 25 years, at first as distant friends. I caught him cheating three years into our marriage.

"How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology — featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation — is available as a paperback and e-book.

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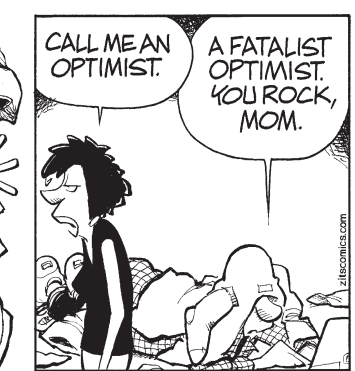
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My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



Animals among God's many gifts to man

Q: We live in a pet-crazed society and it's good for my business since I'm a veterinarian. But while I'd do anything for the animal kingdom, I won't worship it.

creature according to its kind.... And God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:24-25). But the Bible is clear that only mankind was created in the very image of God (Genesis 1:27).

to think of Jesus riding the colt of a donkey into Jerusalem -- and we wait breathlessly for His appearance on a white horse from Heaven (Revelation 19:11).

A: God's creation story is the first miraculous account in the Bible, which includes His creation of animals — a snapshot of His original handiwork: "Let the earth bring forth the living

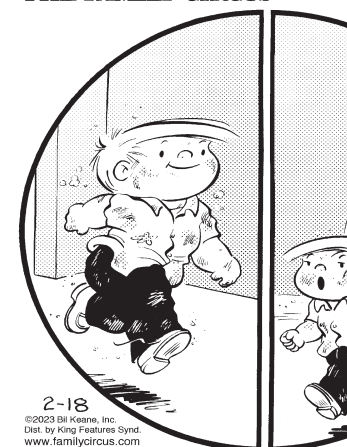
We boast of "man's best friend" because a faithful dog will protect its owner at all cost. Fish are a source of food, and we love to envision Jesus sharing broiled fish with His disciples (Luke 24:42-43). We marvel

(This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Graham.)

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THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane



The LOCKHORNS



Table with 24 columns (times) and 24 rows (channels) listing TV programs for Feb 18, 2023.

Table with 24 columns (times) and 24 rows (channels) listing TV programs for Feb 19, 2023.

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Solution time: 26 mins.

Crossword grid with filled letters and empty squares.

Yesterday's answer 2-18

Another crossword grid with filled letters and empty squares.