

# The News - Banner

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## New opportunities for Cocanower as Teacher of the Year



Indiana's Teacher of the Year, Tara Cocanower of Bluffton High School, speaks to students at Southern Wells. (Photo provided)

By HOLLY GASKILL

Overnight, Bluffton High School teacher Tara Cocanower went from teaching history to making it.

Since being named Indiana Teacher of the Year by the Department of Education, Cocanower has stepped into a completely new realm of speaking engagements, traveling, and statewide recognition. For a self-described introvert, it's been a whirlwind.

"The best word I can use is 'overwhelming,'" Cocanower said with a laugh. "But I feel incredibly privileged to be doing this as a representative of this community."

Most recently, Cocanower went to California to meet with the other 54 teachers representing the U.S. and its territories. There, the teachers had the opportunity to meet one another in person, attend professional development seminars, and learn about emerging technology — a favorite of which was attending a presentation by Sal Khan, founder of the non-profit Khan Academy, which creates popular online education tools.

Cocanower will continue to travel throughout the year, including a visit to the White House and Space Camp. That said, opportunities to speak to students, teachers and business leaders around the state are the most prevalent in her day-to-day role.

The IDOE has empowered Cocanower to speak on her unique platforms, which often leads her to topics regarding mental health,

teacher retention, literacy, imposter syndrome, the future of students, and, above all, empathy.

"At the end of it, it's really all about empathy and supporting one another — for teachers and for students," Cocanower said.

One of Cocanower's favorite parts of speaking engagements has been connecting with future educators.

At a recent Trine University presentation, Cocanower found herself giving the same advice and inspiration she was once given when a young woman asked about being a woman teaching social studies, a typically male-dominated subject. Later, another student said the presentation was exactly what he needed to hear.

"My heart knows that if it matters for one — it matters," Cocanower said.

Wanting to balance these new opportunities with her limits, Cocanower restricts herself to two speaking engagements a week on top of her teaching and coaching schedule. Nevertheless, she is ever aware she would be unable to do this without the support of her Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District family.

Cocanower said she's visited daily by Principal Steve Baker, who asks how she's doing, among other check-ins from Superintendent Brad Yates, Assistant Superintendent Julie Meitzler, and many others who have provided encouragement and take

(Continued on Page 2)

## China takes issue with FBI on lab leak theory

BEIJING (AP) — For the second day in a row, China on Wednesday dismissed U.S. suggestions that the COVID-19 pandemic may have been triggered by a virus that leaked from a Chinese laboratory.

Responding to comments by FBI Director Christopher Wray, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said the involvement of the U.S. intelligence community was evidence enough of the "politicization of origin tracing."

"By rehashing the lab-leak theory, the U.S. will not succeed in discrediting China, and instead, it will only hurt its own credibility," Mao said.

"We urge the U.S. to respect science and facts ... stop turning origin tracing into something about politics and intelligence, and stop disrupting social solidarity and origins cooperation," she said.

In an interview with Fox News that aired Tuesday, Wray said, "The FBI has for quite some time now assessed that the origins of the pandemic are most likely a potential lab incident in (central China's) Wuhan."

"Here you are talking about a potential leak from a Chinese government-controlled lab," Wray said.

Referring to efforts to trace the origin of the coronavirus, he

(Continued on Page 2)

### Reaction time

Norwell boys basketball center Brody Boly's parents — Ryan and Melissa — react to a foul call on their son in the third quarter of Friday's boys basketball sectional semi-final at Peru.

But the Norwell Nation's ultimate reaction was one of joy, below, as the Knights advanced to the championship game against the host Tigers. **Story and game photo on Page 6.** (Photos by Glen Werling)



## Indiana's townships hope to prove worth

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ  
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Indiana's 1,000-plus townships have largely survived nearly three-dozen legislative attempts to reorganize or extinguish them since 2004 - and they're hoping to deter future tries with a new, graph-heavy report released late last month.

Indiana's 1,000-plus townships have largely survived nearly three-dozen legislative attempts to reorganize or extinguish them since 2004 — and they're hoping to deter future tries with a new, graph-heavy report released late last month.

The 108-page document lays out a lengthy list of 27 recommendations to better bolster townships, plus data on township demographics, operations, service provision and finances.

The Indiana Township Association conducted the report with the Indiana University Public Policy Institute. ITA Executive Director Deborah Driskell said she hoped the report would deter future legislative attempts.

"It's just constant[ly] being hit with reform measures," Driskell told the Capital Chronicle Monday. "And on our end, we were struggling to tell our story because we did not have the appropriate data."

But townships' critics continue to say they're outdated and unnecessary.

"There's really nothing that townships do that couldn't and shouldn't be done at the county level," Indiana Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Kevin Brinegar said Wednesday.

Townships are a local unit of government dating back to the 1800s surveying of what was then the Indiana territory, according to the Indiana Historical Bureau — fueling both arguments that they're established sources of help and that they're approaching obsolescence.

Townships once held a wide-range of responsibilities, but today focus on township assistance - once called poor relief.

It's mostly utility and housing aid to low-income residents, according to the report, but can include funds for homeless shelters, funeral and other death services, food, health care and more. The state's 1,002 townships typically distribute more than \$20 million in township aid annually, plus funds from higher units of government.

"There's no other form of government where it is the [legal] duty of that elected official to ensure that the individuals in poverty within their commu-

(Continued on Page 2)

## Lesion removed from Biden's chest cancerous

By ZEKE MILLER  
AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — A skin lesion removed from President Joe Biden's chest last month was a basal cell carcinoma — a common form of skin cancer — his doctor said Friday, adding that no further treatment was required.

Dr. Kevin O'Connor, the White House doctor who has served as Biden's longtime physician, said "all cancerous tissue was successfully removed" during the president's routine physical on Feb.

16. Biden, 80, was deemed by O'Connor to be "healthy, vigorous" and "fit" to handle his White House responsibilities during that physical exam, which comes as he is weeks away from launching an expected bid for reelection in 2024.

O'Connor said the site of the removal on Biden's chest has "healed nicely" and the president will continue skin screenings as part of his routine health plan.

Basal cells are among the most common and easily treated forms of cancer — especially when caught early.

O'Connor said they don't tend to spread like other cancers, but could grow in size, which is why they are removed.

Biden had "several localized non-melanoma skin cancers" removed from his body before he started his presidency, O'Connor said in his Feb. 16 summary of the president's health, noting it was well established that Biden spent a lot of time in the sun during his youth.

First lady Jill Biden in January had two basal cell lesions removed from her right eye and chest.

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### Outside



#### Early spring weather returns

Today	Sunday	Monday
High 45	High 51	High 65
Low 31	Low 41	Low 45

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### Online

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# Closer than ever but farther apart

Dear Annie: I came across your column while searching for tips on how to deal with my marital situation. I don't know what else to do. My heart's broken. I feel depressed, like my whole world has come crashing down on me. I have been with my husband for eight years and married for almost two years now. Things were overall great until we moved in together. I have tried everything I can to make my marriage work, but I am drained of trying.

He neglects me emotionally, always pushes me to the side like I don't matter, picks playing video games over spending a little time with me, and generally disrespects me. I just don't know what else to do. I have become lonely and depressed, and I feel like it is time for me to leave. Talking to him about how I feel angers him, and I feel like I have no one to turn to.

Obviously, he's not willing to put any work or effort into keeping me around. Do you have some advice? I feel like my only option is to leave and file for a divorce. I deserve better than this. I don't want to spend the rest of my life crying and being depressed. Recently, I've also been hurting due to my sister's drug addiction. I just have so much pain in my life, and I've lost myself in the process of helping everyone else. — Bruised at Heart

Dear Bruised: I can feel how exhausted, disappointed and lonely you've been, trying this hard to better your marriage by yourself. This surely isn't the way you envisioned spending your "honeymoon" period.

Before throwing in the towel, start by asking your husband to attend couples therapy with you. The first few years of marriage are a time of adjustment and compromise; it's also long been said that they are the most difficult. Ironically, sometimes moving in with a partner — getting physically closer together — can be what drives a wedge between you. It's crucial to make romance and quality time together a priority, despite your constant physical proximity. Never stop dating. Your husband doesn't have to give up his video games and alone time ENTIRELY, but

make it clear that his current behavior will no longer fly. He must be willing to do better and meet you halfway.

I'd also suggest checking out individual therapy focused entirely on you. Between your sister's addiction and your marital hardships, you more than deserve to take time and find ways to lighten your own load.

Dear Annie: I'm writing in response to "Lost My Daughter," the mom who is uncomfortable with her defiant daughter "Melanie's" relationship with an ex-boyfriend's mother. I once heard that the more you criticize, the more the other person will defend. Stop badmouthing the Jehovah mom and let her actions speak for themselves. Do your best to accept their relationship, no matter how hard that is. Melanie is an adult and has to decide for herself if this woman belongs in her life. Maybe without the incentive to defy you, she'll realize that the relationship isn't all it's cracked up to be. — Been There and My Daughter Saw the Light

Dear Been There: Sage advice, indeed, and I echo every word. We can only impact what's in our control, and for "Lost My Daughter," that entails her one-on-one relationship with "Melanie." I hope they both turn their focus to that, paving the way for a happier, healthier dynamic.

"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. Visit <http://www.creatorspublishing.com> for more information. Send your questions for Annie Lane to [dearannie@creators.com](mailto:dearannie@creators.com).

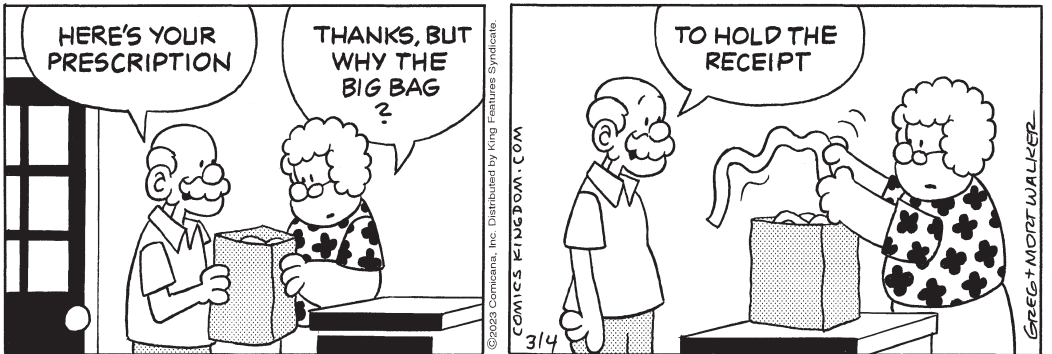
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## Dear Annie

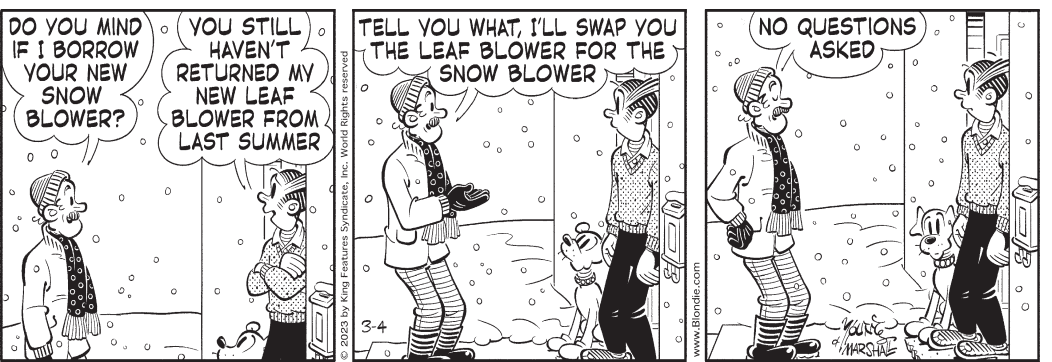
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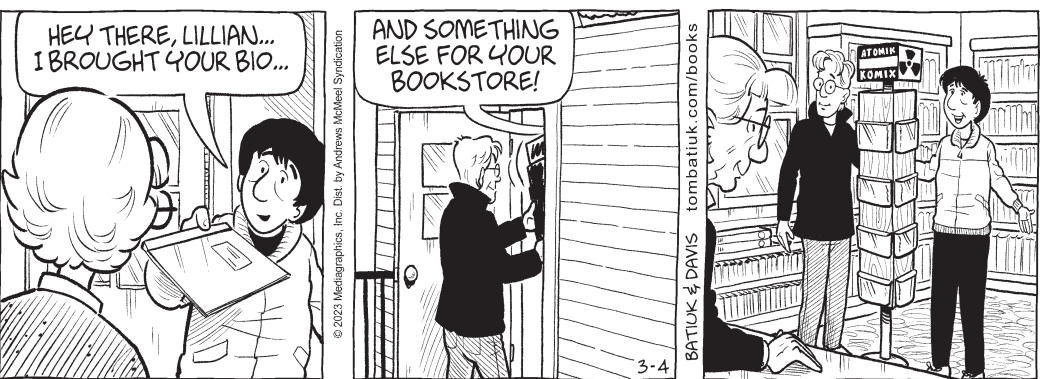
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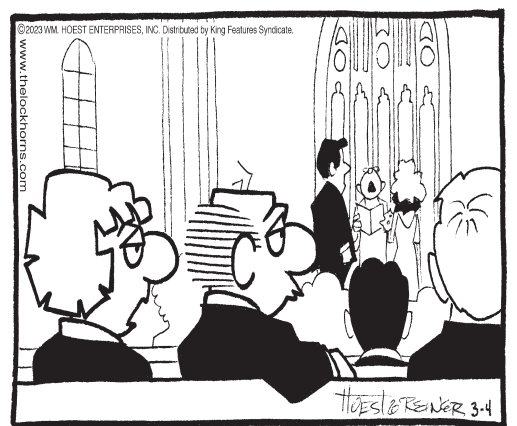


## THE FAMILY CIRCUS



## By Bil Keane

## The LOCKHORNS



## My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



## Prayer drives people to God

a vital link in having strength and endurance. The old saying, "A family that prays together, stays together," carries a lot of weight.

Prayer drives people to God — and God is ready to listen and answer. What a privilege that so many miss out on! Prayer unifies and energizes the believer. It can be a reminder that we do not have to go out into the world without the power of God going with us. Only by direct contact with God through prayer can we hope to have the serenity and security that will enable us to be a witness for Him in a dark and confused world.

The practice of prayer

also equips family members to pray effectively amid the pressures of jobs, school, and community relations. The home is the best place to learn spiritual lessons such as these. And prayer is the best way to prepare for whatever is in store for us in the critical and testing times of life. When difficulties come, we don't have to be dependent on the circumstances around us, but on the hidden resource within us — and that is God Himself.

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

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"Does 'Child's Plate' mean no vegetables?"

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### CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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WINM	12	Let's Take A Fishing Trip	11	63	Solomon's Porch	12	6:30	Julie & Friends
CBS	WANE	(15)	2	15	WANE 15 News (N)	2	7PM	Parent Compass
Antenna	WANE-2	(15)	106	20	Law & Order: SVU "Net Work"	10	8PM	Wheel of Fortune
NBC	WFTA	(21)	4	3	ABC21 (N)	4	9PM	Jeopardy!
NBC	WPTA-2	(21)	7	8	ABC World News (N)	7	9:30	To Be Announced
MNT	WPTA-3	(21)	10	9	News (N)	10	10PM	48 Hours
CW	WISF	(33)	4	33	News (N)	4	10:30	Nightcast (N)
PBS	WFVA	(39)	13	5	Family Feud	13	11PM	Act Your Age (N)
FOX	WBFF	(46)	6	55	Family Feud	6	12AM	Act Your Age (N)
WFFF					Family Feud		12:30	Magnum P.I. "The Big Payback"





# Wells Court Docket

## Wells Superior Court Criminal Cases

Preliminary plea of not guilty entered for Kaitlin M. Ohern, 29, Uniondale, charged with possession of marijuana, a Class B misdemeanor, and possession of drug paraphernalia, a Class C misdemeanor.

While assisting with a probationary search of O'Hern's residence Feb. 27, sheriff's deputies reportedly found a cylindrical container with a label that read "Holy Roller Consume Cannabis" that contained a green and brown leafy plant material with the odor and appearance of marijuana. They also allegedly found a glass and rubber smoking device.

Preliminary plea of not guilty entered for Jason A. Trudel, 37, Fort Wayne, charged with driving while suspended with a prior conviction for the same offense, a Class A misdemeanor; possession of drug paraphernalia, a Class C misdemeanor; speeding, a Class C infraction, and littering, a Class B infraction. Cory Spreen appointed public defender.

At 1:33 a.m. on Oct. 3, 2019, on Ind. 116 near Vera Cruz, a sheriff's deputy spotted an oncoming vehicle with its bright lights on. Instead of the driver dimming the headlights, he turned the lights off entirely before turning them back on. That made the deputy suspicious and he turned around his patrol vehicle and started following the Pontiac. He observed in his report to the court that while following the Pontiac, the digital speedometer of his patrol vehicle showed he was driving 68 mph-55 zone.

The deputy performed a license plate check on the vehicle and discovered it was registered to Trudel, who had a suspended

driver's license. The deputy continued to follow the Pontiac northwest on Ind. 116. Near the Six Mile Church, the driver reportedly tossed something from the vehicle.

The deputy pulled over the Pontiac. Trudel allegedly admitted to the deputy that he knew his driver's license was suspended. When the deputy asked him what he threw out his driver's side window, Trudel reportedly told the deputy it was a pack of cigarettes. The deputy asked him twice again during the course of his conversation with Trudel what Trudel had thrown out the window. Trudel reportedly insisted both times it was just a pack of cigarettes.

However, two Bluffton police officers who arrived to assist the deputy found the items near the church. They allegedly were not a pack of cigarettes as Trudel had claimed, but were reportedly a digital scales — typically used to weigh out portions of illegal substances — and a straw that would be used to ingest illegal substances.

Trudel allegedly admitted to the deputy he threw the items out the window because he knew his license was suspended and he knew he would be pulled over.

### Civil Cases

Final judgment of \$4,503.22 plus court costs of \$115 entered for Total Recovery Services, Fort Wayne, against Cheryl S. Hall, rural Bluffton.

### File Reports

Reports of receipts and expenditures of political committees have been filed with the Wells County Clerk's office by:

- Wells County Democratic Committee, Bluffton. For the period beginning Oct. 15 and ending Dec. 31, 2022, the committee showed \$6,057.10 in cash on hand at the beginning of the reporting period,

received \$735 in itemized contributions and receipts, \$57 in unitemized contributions and receipts, spent \$1,962.03 in itemized expenditures, \$28.71 in unitemized expenditures, and finished the reporting period with \$4,858.36 in cash on hand.

The committee owed no debt. Itemized contributions and receipts were from: Dylan McIntosh, Markle, \$100; Brian and Melanie Hollingsworth, rural Bluffton, \$300; John Bodner, Ossian, \$150; Larry and Teresa Sell, Bluffton, \$50; Sandra Shelly, Bluffton, \$30; and Joy Hann, Bluffton, \$105.

Itemized expenditures were to: AT&T, Carol Stream, Ill., \$131.40 for internet; Northern Indiana Public Service Company, Merrillville, \$166.07 for natural gas for the Democratic headquarters building; Bluffton Utilities, \$270.62 for electricity for the headquarters; Walmart Supercenter of Bluffton, \$139.81 for headquarters supplies; Act-Blue, Somerville, Mass., \$29.13 for fees; The Cincinnati Insurance Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, \$976 for property insurance for the headquarters; United States Postal Service, \$74 for post office box rental and postage; and Bodner Wells Democrat, Ossian, \$175 for a campaign contribution.

- Wells County Republican Central Com-

mittee, Bluffton.

For the period beginning Oct. 15 and ending Dec. 31, the committee showed \$42,135.53 in cash on hand at the beginning of the reporting period, \$242.87 in itemized contributions and receipts, \$1,177.32 in unitemized contributions and receipts, \$4,250.17 in itemized expenditures, \$415.52 in unitemized expenditures and finished the reporting period with \$38,890.03 in cash on hand.

Itemized contributions were from: Brandon Harnish, \$42.87; and Scott and Dayle Mentzer, Bluffton, \$200.

Itemized expenditures were to: Northern Indiana Public Service Company, Merrillville, \$316.17 for natural gas service to the headquarters; Yergy's State Road BBQ, Bluffton, \$380 for catering; Verizon Wireless, Lehigh Valley, Pa., \$54.11 for utilities; Bluffton Utilities, \$340.85 for electrical service to the headquarters building; Indiana Republican Party, Indianapolis, \$1,000 for an event; Preston Wright, Bluffton, \$352.68 as reimbursement; Auto Owners Insurance, Lansing, Mich., \$986.50 for property insurance for the headquarters; Zach Rodgers, Ossian, \$111.59 for reimbursement and Timber Ridge Catering, rural Bluffton, \$735 for catering.

# U.S., World Roundup

## Murdaugh judge's own legal story unfolded in South Carolina

The judge who sentenced Alex Murdaugh on Friday to life in prison for killing his wife and son has earned attention and plaudits for his even-handed demeanor throughout the trial and for his dressing-down of the once-prominent lawyer just before he sent him to prison.

Judge Clifton Newman, a South Carolina native who attended racially segregated schools in the 1950s and 1960s, addressed Murdaugh directly during roughly 20 minutes of comments that ranged from invoking the memories of the defendant's slain son Paul and wife Maggie to lamenting what he described as attacks on the credibility of the state's justice system during the trial. He noted that Murdaugh came from a prominent family of lawyers in the area and that a portrait of his grandfather, a former prosecutor, once hung in the courthouse where he was tried — until Newman had it removed to promote a fair trial.

Among the most poignant moments came when Newman spoke to Murdaugh about his wife and son. Referring to the shooting deaths and lies Murdaugh admitted telling throughout the investigation, the judge said: "Within your own soul, you have to deal with that. And I know you have to see Paul and Maggie during the night time when you're attempting to go to sleep and I'm sure they come and visit you."

"All day, and every night," said Murdaugh, who maintained his innocence during the sentencing hearing.

"And they will continue to do so and reflect on the last time they looked you in the eyes," the judge then replied.

## Hong Kong court convicts activists behind Tiananmen vigil

HONG KONG (AP) — Three Hong Kong activists from a now-defunct group that organized annual vigils commemorating China's 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters were convicted on Saturday for failing to provide authorities with information on the group in accordance with a national security law.

Chow Hang-tung, Tang Ngok-kwan and Tsui Hon-kwong were arrested in 2021 during a crackdown on the city's pro-democracy movement following massive protests more than three years ago. They were leaders of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China before it disbanded under the shadow of the Beijing-imposed law.

The alliance was best known for organizing candlelight vigils in Hong Kong on the anniversary of the Chinese military's crushing of the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests. Critics say its shutdown has shown freedoms that were promised when Hong Kong returned to China in 1997 are eroding.

Before the group voted to disband, police had sought details about its operations and finances in connection with alleged links to democracy groups overseas in August 2021, accusing it of being a foreign agent.

But the group refused to cooperate, arguing police were arbitrarily labeling pro-democracy organizations as foreign agents. It added the police did not have a right to ask for its information because it was not

a foreign agent and the authorities did not provide sufficient justification.

## Fired Memphis EMT says police impeded Tyre Nichols' care

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — A former Memphis Fire Department emergency medical technician told a Tennessee board Friday that officers "impeded patient care" by refusing to remove Tyre Nichols' handcuffs, which would have allowed EMTs to check his vital signs after he was brutally beaten by police.

Robert Long, whose license was suspended for failing to give aid to Nichols and who has also been fired, appeared by livestream before the state Emergency Medical Services Board to share his version of events. He provided details about how he and another EMT, JaMichael Sandridge, responded after five Memphis police officers had punched, kicked and hit Nichols with a baton during an arrest following Nichols fleeing a traffic stop Jan. 7.

Long and Sandridge were fired by the department Jan. 30. Their licenses were suspended by the board Feb. 3, after members watched a 19-minute video taken at the beating location. Officials said the EMTs failed to render aid to Nichols, who died three days after the beating.

The board determined that Long and Sandridge did not perform basic emergency medical examinations while Nichols was handcuffed on the ground and slumped against a squad car, documents obtained by The Associated Press showed. Nichols showed "clear signs of distress, such as the inability to remain in a seated posture and laying prone on the ground multiple times," the documents showed.

Both Long and Sandridge failed to initiate a primary examination, which could have helped identify the presence of any life-threatening injuries, the documents showed. Nichols' vital signs were not checked, he did not receive high-flow oxygen or an intravenous line, and he was not placed on a heart monitor.

## U.S. sending bridge-launchers to Ukraine for spring fight

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. announced a new \$400 million military aid package for Ukraine on Friday that for the first time includes armored vehicles that can launch bridges — allowing troops to cross rivers or other gaps as Russian and Ukrainian forces remain entrenched on opposite sides of the Dnieper River.

The war had largely slowed to a grinding stalemate during the winter months, with Russia and Ukraine firing at each other from across the river. Both sides are expected to launch offensives as temperatures warm.

This round of aid will be drawn from existing U.S. weapons stockpiles so it can arrive in Ukraine faster. The U.S. and allies are trying to rush additional support to Kyiv to best position it for intensified spring fighting.

The Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge is a portable, 60-foot (18-meter) folding metal bridge that is carried on top of a tank body. Providing that system now could make it easier for Ukrainian troops to cross rivers to get to Russian forces.

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