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MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2023

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Recovering from the storm

Left, Dan Kieser, the assistant manager at Helena Agra, reviews the aftermath of Thursday's storm, which ripped off portions of the roofs from two buildings on the property, located at the intersection of 700W and 350S. The storm hurled the detached sheet metal about half a mile into the adjacent field, Kieser said. Along with the damaged roof, the storm lifted one building off the foundation so much that Kieser said he'll need to raze it. (Photo by Chet Baumgartner) Above, the storm toppled over an empty 30,000-gallon, 35-foot tall fertilizer tank. **More photos on Page 3.** (Photo provided)

Americans mark Juneteenth with parties, events, reflection

By **BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS, ED WHITE and ADRIAN SAINZ**
Associated Press

Detroit (AP) — Americans across the country this weekend celebrated Juneteenth, marking the relatively new national holiday with cookouts, parades and other gatherings as they commemorated the end of slavery after the Civil War.

While many have treated the long holiday weekend as a rea-

son for a party, others urged quiet reflection on America's often violent and oppressive treatment of its Black citizens. And still others have remarked at the strangeness of celebrating a federal holiday marking the end of slavery in the nation while many Americans are trying to stop parts of that history from being taught in public schools.

"Is #Juneteenth the only federal holiday that some states have banned the teaching of its history

and significance?" Author Michelle Duster asked on Twitter this weekend, referring to measures in Florida, Oklahoma and Alabama prohibiting an Advancement Placement African American studies course or the teaching of certain concepts of race and racism.

Monday's federal holiday commemorates the day in 1865 when enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, learned they had been freed — two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued dur-

ing the bloody Civil War.

On Juneteenth weekend, a Roman Catholic church in Detroit devoted its service to urging parishioners to take a deeper look at the lessons from the holiday.

"In order to have justice we must work for peace. And in order to have peace we must work for justice," John Thorne, executive director of the Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance, said to the congregation at Gesu Catholic Church in Detroit.

Standing before paintings of a

Black Jesus and Mary, Thorne said Juneteenth is a day of celebration, but it also "has to be much more."

It was important to speak about Juneteenth during Sunday Mass, the Rev. Lorn Snow told a reporter as the service was ending.

"The struggle's still not over with. There's a lot of work to be done," he said.

Most Black Americans agree, according to a recent poll. A full 70 percent of Black adults queried in

(Continued on Page 2)



A new face

Carissa Neuenschwander paints Evie Bates' face at Parlor City Market on Saturday morning. (Photo by Holly Gaskill)

At least 6 killed, dozens injured across the U.S. in weekend shootings

By **MATTHEW BROWN**
Associated Press

At least six people including a Pennsylvania state trooper were killed and dozens injured in a string of weekend violence and mass shootings across the U.S.

The shootings in suburban Chicago, Washington state, Pennsylvania, St. Louis, Southern California and Baltimore follow a surge in homicides and other violence over the past several years that experts say accelerated during the coronavirus pandemic.

"There's no question there's been a spike in violence," said Daniel Nagin, a professor of public policy and statistics at Carnegie Mellon University. "Some of these cases seem to be just disputes, often among adolescents, and those disputes are played out with firearms, not with fists."

Researchers disagree over

the cause of the increase. Theories include the possibility that violence is driven by the prevalence of guns in America, or by less aggressive police tactics or a decline in prosecutions for misdemeanor weapon offenses, Nagin said.

As of Sunday evening, none of the weekend events fit the definition of a mass killing, because fewer than four people died at each location. However, the number of injured in most of the cases does match the widely accepted definition for mass shootings.

Here's a look at the shootings this weekend:

Willowbrook, Illinois

At least 23 people were shot, one fatally, early Sunday in a suburban Chicago parking lot where hundreds of people had gathered to celebrate Juneteenth, authorities said.

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Outside



Cloudy and hot today, wind gusts tonight

Today	Tuesday	Wed.
High 85	High 85	High 85
Low 62	Low 62	Low 62

More Weather on Page 2

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Juneteenth celebrations

(Continued from Page 1)
 AP-NORC poll said “a lot” needs to be done to achieve equal treatment for African Americans in policing. And Black Americans suffer from significantly worse health outcomes than their white peers across a variety of measures, including rates of maternal mortality, asthma, high blood pressure and Alzheimer’s disease.

Although end-of-slavery celebrations are new in many parts of the country, in Memphis, where the slave trade once thrived, the Juneteenth holiday has been celebrated since long before it became a designated federal holiday in 2021. The Tennessee Legislature passed a bill earlier this year making it a state holiday, as well.

Festivities there include a multi-day festival including food, music, arts and crafts, and cultural exhibitions in a tree-lined park in the city’s medical district. The Memphis park once held an equestrian statue and the grave of slave trader and Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest. The statue and the body were moved in recent years.

Memphis is home to the National Civil Rights Museum located at the site of the old Lorraine Motel, the former Black-owned hotel where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed in 1968. The museum is offering free admission on Monday to mark the holiday. At the museum, visitors can hear recorded speeches from civil rights leaders including King, Fannie Lou Hamer, Medgar Evers and others.

Ryan Jones, the museum’s

Family suing San Diego cemetery after remains of Juneteenth trailblazer are missing from plot

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Relatives of a late Black businessman who helped popularize Juneteenth in San Diego are suing a cemetery after his remains were reported missing from the family’s burial plot.

Greenwood Memorial Park and Mortuary informed the family that Sidney Cooper’s body and casket were not in the plot where he was supposed to have been buried more than two decades ago. Cemetery staff discovered it was empty as they prepared to bury Cooper’s wife, Thelma, who died in March.

Staff said they did not know the whereabouts of Cooper’s remains, their daughter, Lana Cooper-Jones, told the San Diego Union-Tribune.

“I was absolutely distraught,” Cooper-Jones said Friday of the moment she learned her father’s body was missing.

Greenwood said it was working to rectify the problem.

“While the placement of this family’s loved one occurred over 20 years ago under previous ownership and management, we recently discovered an issue with placement and are diligently working to confirm the placement of the loved one,” the cemetery said in a statement.

The lawsuit filed Friday seeks to force the cemetery to find the patriarch’s remains and compensate the children for

damages. The court filing was aimed to coincide with Saturday’s Cooper Family Foundation Juneteenth Freedom Festival at San Diego’s Memorial Park.

Cooper, who was 71 when he died in 2001, promoted Juneteenth for decades in his unofficial and affectionate role as “Mayor of Imperial Avenue,” near where ran businesses including a barbershop and a produce store.

The family’s Juneteenth celebrations grew from small events in the parking lot of Cooper’s store to larger gatherings at a city park.

After his death, the family created the foundation to carry on his legacy and celebrate the Juneteenth festival. The June 19 holiday marks the day in 1865 when word that of the Emancipation Proclamation finally reached the final slave holdout of Galveston, Texas, more than two years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the order freeing enslaved Black people.

Cooper-Jones told the Union Tribune that when her father died, they held a graveside service, but they didn’t witness his casket being lowered into the ground.

Cemetery officials have said they might have an idea where his casket was buried, according to the family’s attorneys, Eric Dubin and Annee Della Donna.

associate curator, said Juneteenth should be celebrated in the U.S. with the same emphasis that July 4 receives as Independence Day.

“It is the independence of a people that were forced to endure oppression and discrimination based on the

color of their skin,” Jones said.

The Juneteenth holiday, Jones said, should also be viewed as more than a day when people attend parties and cookouts. In fact, he said, it is a time to reflect on the past.

“It acknowledges the sacrifices of those early civil rights veterans between World War I and World War II, and of course in the modern society, the protests, the demonstrations, the non-violence, the marches,” Jones said.

Weekend shootings

(Continued from Page 1)
 The DuPage County sheriff’s office described a “peaceful gathering” that suddenly turned violent as a number of people fired multiple shots into the crowd in Willowbrook, Illinois, about 20 miles southwest of Chicago.

A motive for the attack wasn’t immediately known. Sheriff’s spokesman Robert Carroll said authorities were interviewing “persons of interest” in the shooting, the Daily Herald reported.

A witness, Markeshia Avery, said the celebration was meant to mark Juneteenth, Monday’s federal holiday commemorating the day in 1865 when enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, learned they had been freed — two years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

“We just started hearing shooting, so we dropped down until they stopped,” Avery told WLS-TV.

Washington State

Two people were killed and two others were injured when a shooter began firing “randomly” into a crowd at a Washington state campground where people stayed to attend a nearby music festival on Saturday night, police said.

The suspect was shot in a confrontation with law enforcement officers and taken into custody, several hundred yards from the Beyond Wonderland electronic dance music festival.

A public alert advised people of an active shooter in the area and advised them to “run, hide or fight.”

The festival carried on until early Sunday morning, Grant County Sheriff’s Office spokesman Kyle Foreman said. Organizers then posted a tweet saying Sunday’s concert was canceled.

Central Pennsylvania

One state trooper was killed and a

second critically wounded just hours apart in central Pennsylvania on Saturday after a gunman attacked a state police barracks.

The suspect drove his truck into the parking lot of the Lewistown barracks about 11 a.m. Saturday and opened fire with a large-caliber rifle on marked patrol cars before fleeing, authorities said Sunday.

Lt. James Wagner, 45, was shot and critically wounded after encountering the suspect several miles away in Mifflintown. Later, Trooper Jacques Rougeau Jr., 29, was ambushed and killed by a gunshot through the windshield of his patrol car as he drove down a road in nearby Walker Township, authorities said.

The suspect was shot and killed after a fierce gunbattle, said Lt. Col. George Bivens, who went up in a helicopter to coordinate the search for the 38-year-old suspect.

“What I witnessed ... was one of the most intense, unbelievable gunfights I have ever witnessed,” Bivens said, lauding troopers for launching an aggressive search despite the fact that they were facing a weapon that “would defeat any of the body armor that they had available to them.”

A motive was not immediately known.

St. Louis

An early Sunday shooting in a downtown St. Louis office building killed a 17-year-old and wounded nine other teenagers, the city’s police commissioner said.

St. Louis Metropolitan Police Commissioner Robert Tracy identified the victim who was killed as 17-year-old Makao Moore. A spokesman said a minor who had a handgun was in police custody as a person of interest.

Teenagers were having a party in an office space when the shooting broke out around 1 a.m. Sunday.

The victims ranged from 15 to 19 years old and had injuries including multiple gunshot wounds. A 17-year-old girl was trampled as she fled, seriously injuring her spine, Tracy said.

Shell casings from AR-style rifles and other firearms were scattered on the ground.

Southern California

A shooting at a pool party at a Southern California home left eight people wounded, authorities said Saturday.

KABC-TV reported authorities were dispatched shortly after midnight in Carson, California, south of Los Angeles.

The victims range in age from 16 to 24, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department said in a statement. They were taken to hospitals, and two were listed in critical condition, the statement said.

Authorities said they found another 16-year-old boy with a gunshot wound when they responded to a call about a vehicle that crashed into a wall nearby.

Baltimore

Six people were injured in a Friday night shooting in Baltimore. All were expected to survive.

Officers heard gunshots in the north of the city just before 9 p.m. and found three men with numerous gunshot wounds. Medics took them to area hospitals for treatment.

Police later learned of three additional victims who walked into area hospitals with non-life-threatening gunshot wounds.

The wounded ranged in age from 17 to 26, Baltimore Police Department spokesperson Lindsey Eldridge said.

Weather

Monday, June 19, 2023

(24-hour observations at 10:14 p.m. Sunday)

High: 81; Low: 55; Precipitation: None

Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 1.99 feet at 8:45 p.m. Sunday

Wells County forecast

Today: Mostly cloudy, with a high near 85. East wind around 10 mph.

Tonight: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 62. Northeast wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Tuesday: Partly sunny, with a high near 85. East wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Tuesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 62. East wind 10 to 15 mph.

Wednesday: Sunny, with a high near 85.

Wednesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 62.

Thursday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 80.

Thursday Night: A 20 percent chance of showers after 2 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 63.

Friday: A 40 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms, mainly after 2 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 80.

Heat wave triggers big storms, power outages in the U.S. Southeast

By SCOTT SONNER
 Associated Press

Forecasters warned people celebrating Father’s Day outdoors to take precautions as triple-digit temperatures prompted heat advisories across much of the southern U.S., triggered thunderstorms that knocked out power from Oklahoma to Mississippi and whipped up winds that raised wildfire threats in Arizona and New Mexico.

A suspected tornado struck near Scranton, Arkansas early Sunday, destroying chicken houses and toppling trees onto homes, the National Weather Service said. There were no immediate reports of serious injuries.

Meteorologists said that dangerous and potentially record-breaking temperatures would continue into midweek over southern Texas and much of the Gulf Coast. Storms producing damaging winds, hail and possibly tornadoes could strike the lower Mississippi Valley.

“If you have outdoor

plans this #FathersDay, don’t forget to practice heat safety! Take frequent breaks, stay hydrated, NEVER leave people/pets alone in a car!” the weather service office in Houston said on Twitter.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards declared a state of emergency for north and central parts of his state after strong winds and severe weather caused widespread power outages on Saturday. On Sunday evening, more than 515,000 people were without electricity in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi, according to PowerOutage.us.

In Florida, the weather service issued another heat advisory Sunday, this time mainly for the Florida Keys. Forecasters said heat index readings - the combination of high temperatures and oppressive humidity - could reach between 108 degrees Fahrenheit and 112 degrees in places such as Key Largo, Marathon and Key West.

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Large boulders and newly planted perennials will greet visitors to the Barry and Doreen Steffen garden in Bellbrook. This is a first-year landscape garden. (Photos by Barbara Barbieri)

Steffen garden ready for tourists June 24, hosted by Master Gardeners

By BARBARA BARBIERI

Among the gardens to be visited on the Master Gardeners Garden Walk on Saturday, June 24, from noon to 4 p.m., will be at the home of Barry and Doreen Steffen, 590 Channing Way in Bellbrook. The rain date is scheduled for Sunday, June 25.

The walk may be started at any of the four featured gardens and a \$5 ticket gives admission to all four.

- Other sites include:
- Sam and Darlene Habegger, 326 Hickory Knoll (Willowbrook)
 - Patti Isch, 301N 700E, Bluffton
 - Genie Meyer, 2059E 800N, Ossian



A boulder-walled entertainment area graces the back yard of the Steffen home with hydrangeas to add a softening background to the area.



Six raised garden boxes, constructed by Barry, are filled with a variety of vegetables. A flagstone walkway around the property features ground cover plants in between the stones.

Police Notebook

INCIDENTS

City:
Friday, 1:04 p.m., 400 block of South Jersey Street. Assisted animal shelter with welfare check on a dog with no shelter. Owner advised he will handle it.

Thursday, 1:24 p.m., Citgo. Report with concerns about pumps being tampered with.

County:
Thursday, 4:55 p.m., south Ind. 1 and east 1050S. Horses loose.

Thursday, 10:27 p.m., east 900S and south Meridian Road. Caller reported an ATV travelling with no headlights. ATV located. One juvenile transported home in Keystone.

Friday, 12:34 p.m., south 300E and east 200S. Tree branch on the east side of the road still stuck in tree. Highway Department notified.

Friday, 8:08 a.m., 8430 SE Jeff Rd., Warren. Vehicle traveling southeast on Jeff Road and veered off a curve in the roadway. The driver

lost control of the vehicle while the tires got caught in the gravel. The vehicle continued off the roadway and entered a ditch on the west side of the road. It appeared the vehicle rolled on the driver's side where it rolled into the ditch, travelling northwest through the ditch before coming to a stop upright and facing southeast off of the roadway. The driver was evaluated by medics at the scene for minor injuries, but refused further treatment. Wyatt's towed the vehicle.

Friday, 8:30 a.m., east 400N and north 100E. Abandoned vehicle on the east side of the intersection.

Ossian:
Thursday, 12:14 p.m., Silo Farms. Caller reported a possible fraud call from someone pretending to be Amazon.

Friday, 4:27 a.m., residence on Countryside Drive. Caller reported an individual had left the residence overnight while suffering from insomnia. Located walking

toward Ossian from Lancaster Central Elementary. Provided transport home.

ARRESTS

Lisa Ann Bailey, 57, Bluffton; driving while suspended, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,500.

Tyler Stanley, 19, Warren; operating a vehicle without financial responsibility, a Class C misdemeanor.

Gwendolyn Marie Lambert, 33, Muncie; failure to appear, a Level 6 felony, possession of a syringe, a Level 6 felony, possession of controlled substance paraphernalia, a Class C misdemeanor, driving while suspended with a prior suspension, a Class A misdemeanor, operating a vehicle with a controlled substance in the body, a Class C misdemeanor, and operating a vehicle while intoxicated endangerment, a Class A misdemeanor. No bond set.

Sean Patrick Foughty, 38, Ossian; domestic battery, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$25,000.

High schoolers raise AP scores in 2022, improvement needed

By CASEY SMITH

Indiana Capital Chronicle

Indiana high schoolers increased their Advanced Placement scores to pre-pandemic norms in 2022, but many are still short of passing, according to preliminary data released by the College Board.

Advanced Placement classes allow students to take college-level coursework and earn college credits while in high school — as long as they pass the end-of-year exams with a score of three, four or five. One is the lowest score a student can earn, while a five is the highest.

Overall, about 56 percent of Indiana 11th and 12th graders who took an AP exam earned a three or higher in 2022. The remainder of student test takers did not earn a high enough score on their exams to qualify for college credit, however.

But, Indiana is improving. In the past 10 years, the state has seen an overall uptick in the number of students who pass AP exams, growing from roughly 45 percent passing in 2012.

In 2019 — the last time AP tests were proctored before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic — 52 percent of students earned a passing score.

Equity gaps still persist. Black students' median score in 2022 was 2.0 — up from 1.9 in 2021 and 1.8 in 2012 — while White students' median was 2.8, up from 2.6 in 2021. Asian students earned a median score of 3.3, up from 3.1 in 2021.

Nationally, the median score earned in 2022 was a 2.9 across all student backgrounds. That's up from 2.7 the year before, and slightly higher than the national average of 2.8 before the pandemic.

How Hoosier students scored
About 17 percent of all

Hoosiers in the 10th, 11th and 12th grades — 44,129 students — took an AP exam in 2022, according to the new data.

That percentage has mostly remained unchanged since 2017, but is slightly higher than in 2012, when 15 percent of Indiana students took an exam. Black students were least likely to take an exam — only 8 percent did so in 2022. That's slightly below the national average, too, which showed that 10 percent of Black students across the U.S. took at

least one exam last year.

Made with Flourish
Nationally, 18 percent of all 10th-12th graders took an AP test in 2022.

Although Indiana saw a 1 percent downturn in the number of students who took an AP exam from 2021 to 2022, the state's overall percentage of participating students has increased by 20 percent since 2012, when just 36,821 students took a test.

Students can take more than one test each year. In 2022, a total of 83,492 Indiana exams were turned in.



Storm damage

Above, Dan Kieser, the assistant manager at Helena Agra, points to the damaged field just south of his property. Prior to Thursday's storm, Kieser said, crops there had already grown several inches high, but the storm essentially destroyed them. Below, sheet metal from the roof is twisted up into jagged teeth due to the storm. (Photos by Chet Baumgartner)



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'The attention span of a gnat.' I take objection to that.

It was a discussion about Major League Baseball's attempts to speed up the game.

Some guy on one of the Facebook groups for Chicago Cubs "fans" — and yes, the quotes mean something — was demanding the other day that the pitch clock be removed and he was starting a petition to assail Commissioner Rob Manfred for this affront to his sensibilities.

That comment was followed shortly thereafter by a comment that the petition was a crazy idea. That comment was followed shortly thereafter by a comment from yours truly, saying that the second guy was absolutely right. I added "amen" to my observation.

The way things go during Facebook disputes is that yet another guy decided to weigh in on things. He said that just became the first objector and your friendly local journalist here had "the attention span of a gnat" does not mean that baseball should abandon its long-standing tradition of dragging everything out as long as humanly possible.

I'm not sure of the numbers, but this season, a pitcher has X amount of time to deliver the pitch after the batter steps into the batter's box. Also, the batter has Y amount of time to step into the batter's box.

If the deadline is not met by the pitcher, a ball is called. If the deadline is not met by the batter, a strike is called.

Since there are only four balls and three strikes available before the batter either walks to first base or walks back to the dugout, there is certainly an incentive to do what you're supposed to do within the prescribed time frame.

I'm thinking of it in terms of pressure.

Sports, particular at the highest level, is all about pressure. Many have been the players who thrive on minor-league pitching who make it to the big show and find the guys are throwing faster and trickier than the guys in the minors. That's why one group of pitchers are in the majors and one group of guys are in the minors.

It's been said that the hardest thing in sports is to hit a pitched ball with a round-barreled bat. I never played baseball at any level other than my days in grade-school Rookie League baseball back home, and I was definitely good-field and no-hit. Actually, I was more no-good-field and no-hit. I loved the game, but succeeding Ron Santo as the Cubs' third baseman was never going to be in the cards.

So I've been a fan of the Chicago National League Baseball Club all my life and, by extension, of MLB in general.

The changes in time were adopted to make the game more interesting to a society that runs at high speed all the time. A couple of years ago, the majors decided to put a man on second base to start extra innings. The thinking was that games would be much less likely to go beyond a 10th or 11th inning. Some still do, but not too often.

That was all about pressure. The pitch clock and the hitter's clock are also all about pressure. Exceptional players — pitchers and hitters — will rise to the challenge. Everything moves at a 21st-century pace.

I like it. I can keep track of several things all at the same time. As a reporter, it's a significant recommendation. As an editor, it has to be part of the job description.

The important thing is not to get distracted. Speeding up baseball helps me in that regard.

I like the change.

daves@news-banner.com

Letters to the Editor Remembering Jim Harris

We are writing to thank the News-Banner, and especially Mark Miller, for the articles published on Memorial Day weekend remembering our brother and cousin, First-Lt. James Craig Harris and his death on Feb. 1, 1971, while serving as an Air Force pilot in Vietnam.

Mark did an incredible job interviewing various family members and capturing our memories, thoughts, and feelings in order to tell the story and legacy of Jim's life, our growing up years in the Liberty Center community, and his untimely death.

As you can tell from Mark's perceptive writing, the pain of Jim's death 52 years ago never goes away for our family and Jim's close friends. He was a special person in many lives and Mark excelled at telling that story.

We'll be forever grateful to the News-Banner for sharing these remembrances of Jim with the Wells County community during this year's Memorial Day observances.

On behalf of the entire Harris family,
DON HARRIS
Burke, Va.

Submit your Letters to the Editor via:

- Our website link (Submit your Letter)
- Fax: (260) 824-0700
- E-Mail: email@news-banner.com
- Mail: PO Box 436, Bluffton IN 46714
- Drop-off: 125 N. Johnson St., Bluffton

All letters must be signed and must include a phone number or address in case verification is desired. Letters are edited for brevity and clarity. **Letters must be no more than 500 words.** Please mark your correspondence as a "Letter to the Editor," or if you wish to express an opinion to us but do not want it published, please mark as "Not for Publication."

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Dave Schultz



Vivek Ramaswamy runs on the unlimited optimism of the inexperienced

An unusual metabolism must propel Vivek Ramaswamy's rapid-fire fluency during peripatetic campaigning. And something keeps him slender while not counting calories, as at last Sunday's brunch of huevos rancheros followed by a hamburger topped with a fried egg.

The first Republican millennial — he is 37 — to run for president sees a path to the presidential nomination: Reach the top three in Iowa, the top two in New Hampshire, then zoooooom. This is not much more implausible than businessman Wendell Willkie was when he won the 1940 nomination after registering zero percent in polls three months before the Republican convention. About governing, Ramaswamy has the limitless optimism of the inexperienced.

"Shutting down" the administrative state? Easy, he says, because much of it was created by rescindable executive orders. Returning the Federal Reserve to the single mandate of preserving the dollar as store of value? Statute be damned, the person he chooses to replace Chair Jerome H. Powell will acknowledge no other mandate.

Making Social Security and Medicare sustainable? Painless: Neither benefit cuts nor revenue increases needed because sustained 5 percent economic growth is attainable partly by "abandoning the climate cult, drilling more, fracking more, burning coal unapologetically." Abolishing the Education Department? A piece of cake, and without congressional involvement: Civil service rules protect individuals, so mass layoffs are possible by executive fiat. And impoundment — the presidential power to not spend appropriated money — should be revived.

Congress might not cheerfully bid adieu to the power of the purse, but Ramaswamy might have the most capacious conception of presidential power — institutional and pastoral — in this history of U.S. politics.

Although he describes today's pandemic of wokeness as a disease — "a cultural cancer" — he also calls it a "symptom" of "a vacuum at the heart of our national soul." Americans, he says, are suffering a "void of purpose." This is an echo of 1979, when President Jimmy Carter addressed the nation about its supposed "crisis of confidence" striking "at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will." Americans were, Carter sermonized, misunderstanding "human identity" and "longing for meaning." Actually, they were longing for competent government, not a presidential scolding.

Ramaswamy sensibly deplors what he calls the "waterfall of political accountability" — authority cascading from Congress to administrative agencies that often work their wills by pressuring private enti-

ties. He thinks the Biden administration's industrial policies — scattering subsidies like confetti — make corporation's "effete," flinching from competition. He is right about many such things, from the Fed's mission creep to the merits of meritocracy.

Ramaswamy and his wife, Apoorva, are the meritocracy incarnate: its energy, intelligence, discipline and creativity. And its boundless confidence in the plasticity of things under the touch of people trained to master society's messiness. He met his wife when, after Harvard, he was at Yale Law School and she, now a surgeon with 21 operations scheduled this week, was at Yale School of Medicine.

One of her husband's rare misfortunes in a life of swift and stratospheric ascent is that the 45th president tarnished the recurring idea that the nation needs a president who thrived in the private sector and is innocent of political experience. Ramaswamy did not inherit wealth: His parents immigrated from India, settling in Cincinnati. He made hundreds of millions from biotech start-ups, and has published three books, so his preternatural confidence is understandable.

But unconvincing, considering the political challenges he must surmount before, he hopes, he will confront governance challenges, such as the war in Europe. Ramaswamy favors "major concessions" to Russia: ending support for Ukraine in exchange for Vladimir Putin's pocketing another portion (beyond Crimea) of Ukraine and promising better behavior (regarding arms control and China).

Ramaswamy, who has not encountered many problems that are impervious to his charisma and certitude, believes that a forcefully expressed presidential vision can conquer Washington's viscosity. When he has lived longer, he will know better. He is less than half the age of the Republican front-runner, and if elected would be four years younger than John F. Kennedy was when, at 43, he became the youngest elected president. Ramaswamy's is not a vanity candidacy: He is public spirited and wholeheartedly exasperated by what he correctly considers the unusual and unnecessary quantity of irrationality in public life today.

It is good that the political process is porous enough to be penetrated by an outsider who is a Roman candle of ideas, many of which merit a hearing. He might kindle a fire. Stranger things have happened. But not many.

georgewill@washpost.com.



George Will



Vivek Ramaswamy

Chris Licht and the decline of journalism

Before the recently fired CNN President Chris Licht fades into a Google search, it is important to reflect on what he tried to do and why it was equivalent to offering mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to a corpse.

In the lengthy Atlantic magazine interview that was used as the basis for his dismissal, Licht told writer Tim Alberta he sees newsrooms obsessing over various kinds of diversity, but not the kind he thinks would help restore public confidence in news reporting: "A Black person, a brown person, and an Asian woman that all graduated from Harvard is not diversity."

Worldview affects how a story is covered and even whether it is covered. Ignoring a story is just as biased as shaping it to fit one's opinion.

David Remnick of The New Yorker interviewed New York Times publisher A.G. Sulzberger about the state of modern journalism. Sulzberger replied: "Should the role of journalists be to push for a certain cause or party or group or ideology or even a specific outcome on a specific issue? Or should the role of journalists be to independently follow the truth and try to arm the public with the facts and the context and the understanding it needs for this giant, diverse democracy to come together and self-govern?"

Monday's New York Times serves as one of many examples of the



Cal Thomas

opposite of what Sulzberger is talking about when it comes to presenting facts and allowing the public to make up their own minds.

On the front page of the digital edition nearly every opinion column, including the lead editorial, is anti-Trump, anti-DeSantis and one headlined "If the Supreme Court abolished Affirmative Action Here's What Women Need to Do."

There's an anti-John Roberts column to boot and another one in Tuesday's edition. In news stories the Times seems to favor only the ones that promote what they believe editorially.

Yes, opinion columns are just that, but where is the diversity of opinion? There hasn't been a consistent conservative at the Times since the late William Safire.

Many journalists attach labels to conservatives (even in their obituaries), such as "extreme," "right-wing," or "hard line," while rarely applying labels to liberals. When they do, "liberal" is intended as a compliment.

The Times, and much of broadcast and cable reporting on culture — from abortion, to climate, to gender — assumes there is only one view and opposing views are to be ignored or ridiculed. It is the same with the economy. Any politician who wants to cut spending and reduce the size and reach of government is branded as uncaring about children and the poor. Contrary arguments are to be

ignored or stereotyped so that readers and viewers reach conclusions desired by those feeding them information and often misinformation.

Sulzberger and his colleagues appear to read and watch only those things that reinforce their views (many conservatives do the same). Why won't this influential publication include conservative columnists in the paper, other than the rare guest columnist? Does Sulzberger read the NY Post, or Washington Times? Does he ever watch Fox News or consult The Heritage Foundation to gauge the thinking of some conservatives? Has he spoken with pro-life people, including women who have had abortions and regret them? Has he met poor people who want to get their children out of failed public schools, but are kept from doing so by Democratic politicians in New York? Will someone show him this column? Would it matter?

Journalism is in trouble, largely of its own making. Trust is key to the success of any industry and when trust is lost it is difficult to get it back.

The late NBC News anchor David Brinkley once said, "It is impossible to be objective, so we must try to be fair."

The days of fairness seem to have gone with the wind to the detriment of journalism and harm to the country. I think that is the point Chris Licht was attempting to make at CNN, a once credible news organization. That it cost him his job makes my point.

tcaditors@tribpub.com

What's happening at the Wells County Public Library

The Wells County Public Library takes its mission to "provide the community with access, knowledge and growth" very seriously and offers a variety of events each week for kids, teens, and adults.

Registration is preferred at most events. To sign up, go to www.wellscolibrary.org, click on the Library Event Calendar, navigate to the date of the event, and view more to get to the registration screen. Alternatively, call 260-824-1612 (Bluffton) or 260-622-4691 (Ossian) to register.

Summer Reading

The library is "All Together Now" for this year's Summer Reading Sign up anytime from now until July 31 for the children's, teen, or adult program. All ages can earn prizes for reading books and participating in events featuring the togetherness theme. Prizes include Chamber Bucks, Amazon gift cards, children's toys, books, and more depending on your age level.

Also, sign up for a variety of summer events and weekly story sessions. Get more info at wellscolibrary.org/summer

Friends of the Library Summer Book Sale

At the Main Library (Bluffton)
Purchase used books, movies, magazines, art prints, and more. Friends of the Library members only sale will be Tuesday, June 20, from 5 to 8 p.m. Memberships will be available at the door. Then from Wednesday, June 21, through Saturday, June 24, the sale will be open for the public during library hours.

Calming Coloring

At the Ossian Branch Library: Every Tuesday from 1 to 3 p.m.

For adults. Stress busting afternoon featuring adult coloring in a restful setting with soft music and snacks. No registration needed.

Tail Waggin Tutors and Therapy Dogs International

At the Main Library (Bluffton)
For children. Does your child need practice reading? Read to Oria on the first and third Wednesdays of the month from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Read to our newest therapy dog, Reddington, on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, also from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.. No registration needed.

Chalk the Block with Kindness at Ossian

At the Ossian Branch Library: Wednesday, June 21, 10 a.m. to noon.
All ages. Drop-in at the library to draw and create messages of kindness with sidewalk chalk. No registration needed.

Our Community Rocks

Wednesday, June 21: 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.
All ages of kids. Meet us at the Rock Creek Stone Quarry (781N-500W) for family tours. Registration required. Space is limited on each tour.

WCPL Teens Rock (paint)!

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Thursday, June 22, 3 to 4 p.m.
Grades 6-12. Share your creativity with the community by painting a rock or two. Give it a fun design, an inspirational quote, or even turn it into a fun character! These rocks will then be hidden around Wells County for others to find and share. Registration recommended.

Puzzle Pandemonium

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Saturday, June 24, 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.



Families or groups of up to five people will compete to see who can assemble the same puzzle the fastest. Sign up for the 200-piece puzzle competition at 10 a.m., which will be followed by the 100-piece round at 1 p.m. Registration required.

River Clean-Up

Monday, June 26: 5:30 to 7 p.m.
Teens (ages 12 and older) and adults. Keep our community clean and learn about our local waterways! Meet at the Wabash Pavilion behind Hardee's for a short presentation and then stay to help pick up litter along the trail and banks of the Rivergreenway. This program is held in cooperation with the Parks Department and the Upper Wabash River Basin Commission. Registration recommended.

Golden Gamers

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Tuesday, June 27: 3 to 5 p.m.
Adults. Are you bored? Do you need some social interaction? Come and enjoy two hours of socializing, games, and snacks. Registration appreciated.

Teen Advisory Board

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Wednesday, June 28: 6 to 6:45 p.m.
Grades 6-12. Do you wish you had a say in teen programming at the library? Do you need volunteer credit? Join the Teen Advisory Board! You don't need to sign up—just show up for the TAB meetings on the last Wednesday of each month.

Stuffed Animal Party at Ossian

At the Ossian Branch Library: Wednesday, June 28, 6 to 7 p.m.
Grades K-6. Bring your stuffed animals to the library and then enjoy stories and pizza. Registration required.

Community Connection K-9 Unit

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Wednesday, June 28, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Grades K-6. Join us as we learn about Sgt. Deputy Andrew Campbell and his K-9 partner Leo and their work at the Wells County Sheriff's Department. Registration required.

Kids' Club at Ossian

At the Ossian Branch Library: Mondays through July 17 (except for July 3): 1 or 3 p.m.
Grades K-4. "All Together Now" activities, crafts, and stories. Registration required.

Library Hours

At the main library in Bluffton — Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
At the Ossian branch library — Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon.
Access the library online at www.wellscolibrary.org for digital books, magazines, online databases, event info, and more.



Participants in the Bluffton Optimist Club's Fishing Derby were are pictured at left.

In the top photo are, front row, left to right, Andrew Arnold, Harrison Kunkle, Ezra Buyer, Sophie Morgan, Kree Reinhard, Micah Buyer, Leah Arnold, Jacob Dunsmore and Brodie Morgan. In the back row are Huron Draper, Lennon Draper, Sullivan Draper Xyzavier Bagley, Hector Arnold, Riley Kelly, Olson Draper, Kree Bagley, David Dunsmore Lanie Evans and Quinton Dawson.



In the bottom photo are, front row, left to right, Clara McAfee, Caleb McAfee, Lucy Dunsmore, Bridget Evans, Bella O'dell, Grace McAfee, and Liam Schlechter. In the back row are Abel Schlechter, Landon Dunsmore, Eliza Kunkle and Lily Gerdom. Not pictured: Micah McAfee, Lily Morgan and Kinzie Morgan,

Kids' Fishing Derby held at Ouabache

The Bluffton Optimist Club recently hosted its annual Kids Fishing Derby at Ouabache State Park with a total of 67 youth participating. Each youth had the opportunity to fish with their own equipment or use one of the poles provided by Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

The participating youth also had the opportunity to draw for prizes that included various fishing tackle and poles that were sponsored by the Optimist Club.

The Bluffton Optimist Club meets at 6:45 a.m. Tuesdays at the Hoosier House Restaurant on the south edge of Bluffton.

Future club events for include the 4-H Fair pork chop dinner fundraiser, July 18, 4 to 7 p.m., and the 4-H Fair kids pedal tractor pull, July 19, with registration at 7 p.m. and competition at 7:30 p.m.

On Campus

Riley Zoll of Bluffton received a Jay Olson Memorial Essay in German Award at Albion College's Honors Convocation this spring. Faculty members annually recognize academic excellence with awards.

Zoll is majoring in German (emphasis language and culture for professions) with minors in English as a second language education and educational studies.

by Melba Edwards

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Zanesville News

It seems the days go faster and there is much more to do. I have a countdown to July 29 when we celebrate the 175th anniversary of Zanesville's founding. The preparations still need to be finalized.

I need volunteers to be a part of the team to play the old-time team from Huntington.

You need to call Tara if you want to be in the parade. The theme, of course, is the 175 Birthday.

Get your beards ready and practice your hulu-hoop skills for contests. Also practice your line dancing.

If you have been in the car show and you did not get information in the mail, I may not have your address so look for a registration on the Facebook page.

The Zanesville Youth Program continues in its fourth week for the summer. On Tuesday, June 20, the program will include games, snacks, stories, and crafts at the church. On Thursday June 22, the group will be

walking to the Lions Club Ballpark to take on the Norwell Lady Knights softball team in some ZYP games. We will also enjoy some ballgame food. Wear your ZYP shirt and tennis shoes. If you have not registered I think you still can as the program goes on for another week, ending June 29.

Let's Read It!, a program that began last week, continues at the Zanesville Community Church of God. They are getting ready for the Centershot archery program. You can now register for Centershot by picking up a form from the church office or on Facebook. The deadline to register is July 1.

They remind everyone that they are getting ready for the big rummage sale July 28 and 29 that is sponsored by the Women's Ministry. Call if you have donations. There will also be food at the church on those days.

The Zanesville Town Council will meet at regular meeting time of 6:30

p.m. on Tuesday, June 20. All are welcome to attend this meeting that is held at the town building on Wayne Street.

The Northeast Indiana Baseball Association inducted several into their Hall of Fame. Jarrett Grube, a DeKalb High School graduate and a pitcher for 5 Major League Baseball organizations, was one of those inducted. Kip McWilliams, head coach at Indiana Tech for 16 years, was also added. The Colin Lister Award went to Canterbury Head Coach Pat McMahon and the Bob Parker Award to Justin Prince of WFFT-TV 55.

Jarrod Parker, a Norwell High School graduate who pitched for the Oakland A's, was also voted into the Hall of Fame but due to previous commitments, Parker will be inducted at the 2024

NEIBA banquet. A DeKalb senior, Parker Smith, received the Dick Crumback NEIBA Player of the Year. Smith, a pitcher and infielder, has signed to play college baseball at Wabash College.

Many of my readers like to get info on train excursions in the area as they liked to take their grandchildren for a ride. Visit the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum's website, hoosiervalley.org, for coming events. You can order tickets on line or call the depot from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays at 574-896-3950. The excursions are on Saturday and are approximately 45 minutes long. Ticket prices begin at \$10 and groups of six or more get \$2 off each ticket.

The site of the train ride is between North Judson and English Lake.

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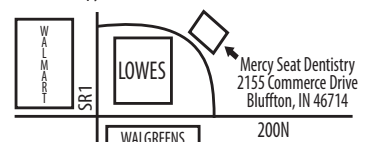
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News-Banner Scoreboard

BASEBALL

American League

Table with columns for East Division, Central Division, West Division, and Saturday's Games. Includes teams like Tampa Bay, Baltimore, and New York.

Table with columns for National League. Includes teams like Atlanta, Miami, Philadelphia, and New York.

Table with columns for National League. Includes teams like Arizona, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

TRANSACTIONS

Sunday's Transactions
BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
DETROIT TIGERS — Claimed LHP Anthony Misiewicz...

Mateo, Frazier help Orioles rally for win against Cubs

By PATRICK ROSE
Associated Press
CHICAGO (AP) — Adam Frazier and Jorge Mateo each hit an RBI single during Baltimore's three-run sixth inning...

The Orioles have not been swept since a three-game series at Detroit from May 13-15, 2022. They haven't been swept by an NL team since May 21-23, 2021, at Washington.

Chicago won a season-high five straight. Mike Tauchman and Christopher Morel homered for the Cubs, who finished with three hits.

Bradley Beal being traded to Phoenix by Washington

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

Bradley Beal will soon be part of the NBA's newest Big 3, after the three-time All-Star agreed Sunday to be traded to the Phoenix Suns and team up with Kevin Durant and Devin Booker in a trio with serious offensive firepower and championship aspirations.

For Phoenix, a franchise that had a 2-0 lead in the NBA Finals against Milwaukee in 2021 before falling in six games, the motivation is obvious — to win a title. The Suns will be different this coming season; Frank Vogel is succeeding the fired Monty Williams...

Verstappen ties Senna in F1 wins as Red Bull for 100th win

By JENNA FRYER
AP Auto Racing Writer

When he won the pole in the pouring rain, Max Verstappen was quick to explain that it had been his father who would stand on the wet track during his early days of karting and point him to the correct driving lines.

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Without him I would not sit here today," Verstappen said of his father. "He has taught me and prepared me for so much, from a very young age. He had this goal, he had this goal set for me to first of all be better than him. And then try to get to Formula One, you know?"

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Norris chased Ocon for the final lap and the two had a wheel-to-wheel battle into the final chicane, where Norris had to bail out on the game of chicken. Norris dropped from ninth to 13th.

Verstappen ties Senna in F1 wins as Red Bull for 100th win

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AP Auto Racing Writer

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Attorney General Garland keeps poker face after Trump charges

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — On his first day as attorney general, Merrick Garland pledged a return to what he called the “norms” of the Justice Department and said he would work to eliminate the perception of political interference. But in the two years since he took office, the former federal judge has found himself in the middle of a political firestorm of historic proportions.

The case against Donald Trump — the first former president to face federal criminal charges — brought a crush of protesters to the Miami courthouse last week, as well as a torrent of social media broadsides from Trump and an onslaught of criticism from Republicans.

The decision to charge Trump, who is running for president again, is perhaps the most consequential in the history of the Justice Department. The ultimate call on that came from Gar-

land, whose demeanor leans to the mild.

Even the day when prosecutors informed Trump about the charges was outwardly quiet in the halls of the state Justice Department headquarters. That stillness carried into the night amid the furor unleashed when the former president broke the news on his social media platform.

It was hardly the first time that Garland had kept a poker face while under a high-profile glare. He had stayed mum when his nomination for the Supreme Court by President Barack Obama in 2016 languished long enough to break a century-old record before it expired.

Garland spent two decades as a judge, and that experience seemed to come through in his folded hands and stoic expression when he made his public comments on Wednesday about the charges against Trump. The attorney general stressed that he had followed the rules and regula-

tions for special counsels and he punctuated each word as he defended investigator Jack Smith as a “veteran career prosecutor.”

“We live in a democracy. These kind of matters are adjudicated through the judicial system,” Garland said as he took about three minutes worth of questions from two of the gathered reporters at the start of a meeting with U.S. attorneys on violent crime.

That repeated mantra of commitment to the rule of law has not soothed Republicans who are standing by the indicted former president and reframing the charges as an unfair political persecution.

Those close to Garland say he has long had a careful, thoughtful presence and does what is needed, with few outward displays of emotion. Still, this moment is likely not an easy one, said friend Robert Post, a professor at Yale Law School who first got to know Garland when they served as clerks together in

the late 1970s.

“I’m sure he is saddened by the spectacle of a former president being indicted for the kinds of crimes that we see Trump indicted for,” Post said. “He’s the least partisan person that I know. He cares about the law first and foremost.”

Smith’s appointment as special counsel after Trump announced his 2024 presidential campaign was another effort to uphold Justice Department norms and the principle that the agency follows the facts and the law, not politics, said Anthony Coley, who previously served as Garland’s chief spokesman at the department.

“For the attorney general, the rule of law is not just some lawyer’s turn of phrase. For him, the rule of law is foundational element of our democracy,” he said.

It was Smith, a former war crimes prosecutor, who stood up alone behind a podium the day after the Trump charges became public to declare: “We have one

set of laws in this country and they apply to everyone.”

That appearance also carried visual cues to the separation between Garland and Smith.

Smith did not speak from the neoclassical headquarters where Garland works, but held his news conference in the sleek building across town where he has been working. The special counsel attended the arraignment where Trump pleaded not guilty to illegally hoarding classified documents. Smith sat in the front row behind his team of prosecutors.

He is empowered to decide whether any charges should be brought, though Garland retains ultimate oversight of his work.

Trump announced on June 8 that he had been indicted, and according to the White House, Biden learned of the 37 felony counts against the former president through news coverage. Biden was asked the next day whether he had

talked to Garland about the case. “I have not spoken to him at all,” Biden told reporters. “I’m not going to speak to him.”

Garland was confirmed by the Senate in March 2021 on a bipartisan vote, with both Democrats and Republicans saying he had the right record and temperament for the moment. He was a federal appeals court judge for more than two decades after a stint in the Justice Department where he earned a reputation for meticulous preparation in the prosecution of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people.

Garland’s handling of the release of another special counsel investigation was similarly low key. The review of the origins of the FBI’s investigation of Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign, carried out by special counsel John Durham, originally started under Trump. When it was completed under Garland, the report was released with few redactions.

First U.S. deep water port for the Arctic to host cruise ships, military

By MARK THIESSEN
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The cruise ship with about 1,000 passengers anchored off Nome, too big to squeeze into the tundra city’s tiny port. Its well-heeled tourists had to shimmy into small boats for another ride to shore.

It was 2016, and at the time, the cruise ship Serenity was the largest vessel ever to sail through the Northwest Passage.

But as the Arctic sea ice melts under the pressures of global warming and opens shipping lanes across the top of the world, more tourists are venturing to Nome — a northwest Alaska destination known better for the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race and its 1898 gold rush than luxury travel.

The problem remains: There’s no place to park the big boats. While smaller cruise ships are able to dock, officials say that of the dozen arriving this year, half will anchor offshore.

That’s expected to change as a \$600 million-plus expansion makes Nome, popula-

tion 3,500, the nation’s first deep-water Arctic port. The expansion, expected to be operational by the end of the decade, will accommodate not just larger cruise ships of up to 4,000 passengers, but cargo ships to deliver additional goods for the 60 Alaska Native villages in the region, and military vessels to counter the presence of Russian and Chinese ships in the Arctic.

It’s a prospect that excites business owners and officials in Nome, but concerns others who worry about the impact of additional tourists and vessel traffic on the environment and animals Alaska Natives depend on for subsistence.

The expansion will “support our local economy and the local artists here, the Indigenous artists having access to the visitors and teaching and sharing our culture and our language and how we how we make our beautiful art,” said Alice Bioff, an Inupiaq resident of Nome.

Bioff was a tour guide who greeted the Serenity’s passengers when they

arrived in 2016. One of the guests admired her cloth kuspuk, a traditional Alaska Native garment similar to a smock, and wanted to know if it was water resistant.

It wasn’t, but the interaction inspired Bioff to create her own line of waterproof jackets styled like kuspuks. She now sells to tourists and locals alike from her own Naataq Gear gift store, a retail spot in the post office building, where about 20 Alaska Native artists offer ivory carvings, beadwork or paintings through consignment.

Studies show that cruise ship passengers typically spend about \$100 per day in Nome, city manager Glenn Steckman said.

With the expansion, he’s hoping guests on larger cruise ships will extend their stays to experience more of Nome and the tundra, to view wild musk ox, or to sip a drink at the 123-year-old Board of Trade Saloon.

Climate change is making this all possible.

Nome, founded after gold was discovered in 1898, has seen six of its 10

warmest winters on record just in this century. The Bering Strait shipping lanes have gotten only busier since 2009, going from 262 transits that year to 509 in 2022.

“We’re going to be the first deep-draft Arctic port but probably not going to be the last,” Nome Mayor John Handeland said.

The Bering Sea ice on average reaches Nome in late November or December, about two or three weeks later than it did 50 years ago, said Rick Thoman, a climate specialist at the International Arctic Research Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

In 2019, mushers in the Iditarod, who normally drive their dog teams on the Bering Sea ice to the finish line in Nome, were forced onto the beach because of open water. The ice season will only get shorter, Thoman said.

The existing port causeway was completed in the mid-1980s. The expansion will be completed in three phases and effectively double its size. The first part of the project is funded

by \$250 million in federal infrastructure money with another \$175 million from the Alaska Legislature. Field work is expected to begin next year.

Currently three ships can dock at once; the expanded dock will accommodate seven to 10.

Workers will dredge a new basin 40 feet deep, allowing large cruises ships, cargo vessels, and every U.S. military ship except aircraft carriers to dock, Port Director Joy Baker said.

U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan, an Alaska Republican, said the expanded port will become the centerpiece of U.S. strategic infrastructure in the Arctic. The military is building up resources in Alaska, placing fighter jets at bases in Anchorage and Fairbanks, establishing a new Army airborne division in Alaska, training soldiers for future cold-weather conflicts and has missile defense capabilities.

“The way you have a presence in the Arctic is to be able to have military assets and the infrastructure that supports those assets,”

Sullivan said. The northern seas near Alaska are getting more crowded. A U.S. Coast Guard patrol board encountered seven Chinese and Russian naval vessels cooperating in an exercise last year about 86 miles north of Alaska’s Kiska Island.

Coast guard vessels in 2021 also encountered Chinese ships 50 miles off Alaska’s Aleutian Islands.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg last year warned that Russia and China have pledged to cooperate in the Arctic, “a deepening strategic partnership that challenges our values and interests.”

Still, the prospect of Nome welcoming more tourists and a greater military presence bothers some residents. Austin Ahmasuk, an Inupiaq native, said the port’s original construction displaced an area traditionally used for subsistence hunting or fishing, and the expansion won’t help.

“The Port of Nome is development purely for the sake of development,” Ahmasuk said.

Relations between Disney, firefighters jeopardized

New Disney governing body reopened negotiations on updated contract

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — After appointees of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis took over Walt Disney World’s governing district earlier this year, its firefighters were among the few employees who publicly welcomed them with open arms.

But that warm relationship is in jeopardy as a new district administrator has reopened negotiations on a contract that was approved last month by the unionized firefighters, promising pay raises and more manpower.

A vote on the contract originally was targeted for last month during a meeting of the Central Florida Tourism Oversight District board of supervisors. But it was never brought up, and it did not appear on an agenda released ahead of the next meeting scheduled for Wednesday.

Under the three-year contract proposal overwhelmingly approved by 200 firefighters and first responders, annual starting pay for firefighters would increase to \$65,000, up from \$55,000. It also promised hiring up to three dozen firefighters and paramedics.

At several meetings since the DeSantis-appointed supervisors took their seats this spring, Jon Shirey, who leads the firefighters’ union, praised them for visiting firefighters at their stations around the 39 square-mile (101 square-kilometer) Disney World property.

The firefighters looked forward to collaborating with the new supervisors and administrator after years of clashing with their Disney-supporting predecessors, and viewed the

appointments as “an opportunity for a fresh start,” he said.

“Almost overnight, a change occurred that we have never experienced — transparency, open dialogue, the ability to sit down and have our issues heard and felt listened to,” Shirey told board members last month. “You have been able to build bridges that were long burned.”

The feeling was mutual, with board chairman Martin Garcia saying last month that the supervisors were working with the firefighters to resolve their issues. Even so, Garcia made clear that the firefighters weren’t the only district employees the board wanted to support.

“We also need to let the (other) employees know, we love you, too. We care about you. We love you as much as we love our firefighters,” Garcia said.

But the delay in approving the contract has alienated the firefighters’ union, which last year endorsed the gubernatorial reelection campaign of DeSantis, who recently launched a campaign for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination.

The old contract expired four years ago, and the firefighters declared an impasse last year when the district’s board was still controlled by Disney supporters. The Reedy Creek Professional Firefighters, Local 2117 have warned for years that they are understaffed, which poses a safety risk as the central Florida theme park resort grows bigger.

Last month, District Administrator John Classe, who originally negoti-

ated by the board with Glenton Gilzean, a DeSantis ally who previously served as president and CEO of the Central Florida Urban League and will receive a \$400,000 salary in his new job. The district also is paying Classe to stay on as a special advisor.

Board spokesperson Alexei Woltornist said negotiations with the union were continuing, without explaining why they were reopened with a contract already approved by the firefighters and first responders.

“Administrator Gilzean is actively working with the fire department to finalize a deal that offers a competitive compensation package and gives firefighters the resources they need to protect the public,” Woltornist said in an email to The Associated Press.

Officials with the firefighters’ union did not comment.

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While Gilzean may alienate the firefighters, whose support gave the DeSantis takeover some legitimacy, he may gain credibility with other constituencies within Disney’s governing district and put some distance between himself and his predecessor, said Richard Foglesong, a Rollins College professor emeritus who wrote a definitive account of Disney World’s governance in his book, “Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando.”

“He’s an unproven administrator, yet here he’s showing he’s no pushover when dealing with a cantankerous group, which frankly impresses me,” Foglesong said.

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