

# The News - Banner

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2023

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## Staff shake-up continues at Health Department

By HOLLY GASKILL

Another shift has come to the Wells County Health Department staff.

Marlene Hoag, the department's interim administrator, notified the health board during their meeting Thursday morning that Food Environmental Specialist Daniel Miller recently resigned. Both environmental specialist positions are now vacant.

Meanwhile, former septic environmental specialist Ryan Bennett agreed to return on a contract through Dec. 31. He has since submitted his resume for the septic position, which he left in June.

Hoag also brought Sahara Wall, vital records clerk, on full-time. Hoag advised she had received approval from Health Officer Dr. Kay Johnson, but had not heard direction from elected officials regarding Wall's prospective title or salary. Hoag had also been unable to list salary information for the department's open positions — deputy administrator, septic environmental specialist, medical assistant and vital records clerk.

At the time, the health board made no motion or direction regarding Wall or Ben-

nett's employment.

By the Wells County Council's year-end meeting in the afternoon, the council members unanimously approved two position salaries — \$51,500 for a deputy administrator and \$56,000 for an environmental specialist.

Council member Seth Whicker stated these figures had come from the commissioners, understanding that the environmental specialist could absorb both food and septic positions. Hoag and Commissioner Blake Gerber said they had not heard those specific figures before the meeting.

Hoag reiterated the same sentiment she had made to the health board that morning when asked about the possibility of combining the environmental specialist positions. "I think that's unfair ... for somebody else to take (both positions), and that's part of the reason we're in the issues that we're in the Health Department," she said. Instead, Hoag suggested Bennett serve as supervisor of the two positions.

Whicker then asked if a part-time employee could complete food inspection

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## Hearing for county health officer's removal canceled

By HOLLY GASKILL

The public hearing regarding the removal of Public Health Officer Dr. Kay Johnson was canceled preceding the health board's final meeting of the year.

The board initiated the process for Johnson's removal Dec. 6 and was scheduled to have a hearing Wednesday. The News-Banner received notice of the hearing's cancellation from County Attorney Ted Storer the evening prior. Although the matter was not addressed during the regular board meeting, Interim Administrator Marlene Hoag said Johnson was out of town.

A new hearing has not yet been announced.

Meanwhile, Hoag advised the department has continued through a busy season of vaccinations, end-of-year renewals and septic inspections. Regional Sewer District Superintendent Lewis Brown said the RSD has connected over half of Craigville to the sewer system.

Public Health Nurse Lynn Blevins also reported the department had interceded with some recalls of applesauce and Quaker oatmeal bars. Ryan Bennett, who is contracted to help with food inspections, said the department pulled affected prod-

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### Singing for joy

At top, Shayla Jackson, a fourth grade student in Stacy Lehman's class, applauded the teachers for their impressive dance moves.

Above, Santa and Mrs. Claus made an appearance at the Sing program at Bluffton-Harrison Elementary School, and wished the school a very Merry Christmas. (Photos by Sydney Kent)

Above right, pictured from left to right, Lucy Cameron, Hannah Wyant, Grant Penrod, Jace Hartman, Sadie Johnson and Ariel Coffiolo belt out carols and look on with bated breath as their teachers competed in games at the Southern Wells Sing Program Thursday. (Photo by Jonathan Snyder)

At right, teachers and students were spotted singing "All I Want for Christmas is You" by Mariah Carey. (Photo by Sydney Kent)

## Storm dumps rains, unleashes flooding in coastal California

By EUGENE GARCIA and JOHN ANTCZAK

Associated Press

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. (AP) — Motorists were stranded in their vehicles on flooded roadways in typically idyllic Santa Barbara on Thursday, while nearby Oxnard got a month's worth of rain in a single hour in a storm that pummeled Southern California while Christmas travel got underway.

The downpours targeted Ventura and Santa Barbara counties northwest of Los Angeles County overnight, swamping areas in the cities of Port Hueneme, Oxnard and Santa Barbara, where a police detective carried a woman on his back after the SUV she was riding in got stuck in knee-deep floodwaters.

Between midnight and 1 a.m., the storm dumped 3.18 inches of rainfall in downtown Oxnard, surpassing the area's average of 2.56 inches (for the entire month of December, according to the National Weather Service).

The deluge prompted flash flooding in Ventura County around 1:30 a.m., the weather service said. Later in the morning, streets began filling with water in parts of Santa Barbara as the storm delivered another deluge. By midday, the rain and wind had eased and residents ventured outside to look at the damage.

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## Faith groups: more foster homes needed for migrant children

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO, Associated Press

HOMESTEAD, Florida (AP) — Snuggling on the sofa across from the Christmas tree, Sol proudly showed off the dog her foster parents gave her for earning all A's even though she crossed the southern U.S. border knowing very little English.

"They helped me a lot," said the 14-year-old eighth grader. Then she blushed, hid her face in Cosmo's fur, and added in Spanish, "Oooh, I said that English!"

Sol — who is from Argentina — is among tens of thousands of children who arrive in the United States without a parent, during a huge surge in immigrants that's prompting congressional debate to change asylum laws.

Faith and community groups across the country are trying to recruit many more foster families to help move the children from overwhelmed government facilities. U.S. authorities encountered nearly 140,000 unaccompanied minors at the border with Mexico in fiscal year 2023, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Almost 10,000 are still in custody of the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement, according to its latest data.

"It's amazing the quantity of children who are coming,"

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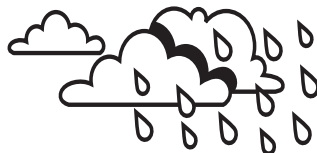
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### Outside



Chance of rain today, rain and wind gusts tonight

Today	Saturday	Sunday
High 49	High 50	High 58
Low 41	Low 44	Low 44

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## Health Department

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responsibilities. According to Hoag, there are seasons where food-specific responsibilities are not full-time, but the environmental specialists often carry the workload together, helping in each division.

Hoag also noted that Bennett had only agreed to return and complete food inspections for an interim period.

"Would this best to be put on pause? I'm a bit confused." Council member Todd Mahnensmith asked, and Council member Scott Elzey agreed.

Council member Brandon Harnish suggested they could re-evaluate the department's needs for a part-time position as needed. In the meantime, however, he said the budget permitted a raise by eliminating the other position.

Hoag recognized this sentiment but expressed that the raise was needed to compete with neighboring counties and similar positions already. Prior to the county pay matrix, the budgeted salary for the environmental septic position

was \$46,768, and the deputy administrator was \$39,859.

Ultimately, Harnish motioned to approve the salaries. As he did, Clerk Beth Davis raised her hand in the audience. Davis' attempt was not seen nor was there time for public comment.

During the health board meeting, Hoag had tearfully expressed her frustration with the lack of communication and support she had received from the board and officials.

When bringing Wall on full-time, Hoag said she contacted the council to discuss amending the budget accordingly. She was directed to several other officials, but was unable to get a clear answer on how to proceed.

"There's a lot of chiefs, not enough Indians," said Public Health Nurse Lynn Blevins.

"How can we help you?" asked board member Dr. Mary Donley. "What does the department need from the board?" added board member Molly Hoag.

"When I was hired back (as interim), I was given full responsibility to do what I had done prior, and I have tried to do that," Marlene Hoag paused to collect herself. "I have way too many chiefs coming at me. My main focus was to try to get everything settled ... All we've ever asked for is support for what we do, and so many times when something happens out and about, we're the last to hear about (it)."

Hoag was contracted as an interim for three to six months beginning July 5. On Thursday, Hoag reiterated her desire to remain until the department reached a more stable position, had its finances in order, and was trained adequately for administrative responsibilities.

She concluded, "It has been a trying six months, and there's no reason it should have been a trying six months if we would have sat down and talked about the real issues here the way they should've been talked about."

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## County health officer

(Continued from Page 1)

ucts before they reached shelves, but advised caution with online and gift basket purchases.

The board also received public comment from Jennifer Brink, 920 River Rd. in Bluffton, regarding the county's choice not to participate in Health First Indiana. Wells was one of only six counties that did not participate in the program's first year, which would have

allowed the county over \$50,000 to support healthcare opportunities.

While the decision belonged to the County Commissioners, Brink criticized the board's inaction in the decision and months following, asking them to voice a desire to the commissioners to opt in next year. "Wells County is just so special that there's (86) other counties that got their questions answered, but

you didn't think there was enough answers?" Brink asked. "I'm mortified. Why couldn't you?"

Brink also stated she was associated with the "Good Trouble Coalition," a healthcare advocacy group, and would continue to bring attention to the matter.

All current members of the board were present — Chris Esterling, Steve Bales, Tom Longenberger, Dr.

Mary Donley, Molly Hoag and Ann McNabb. In 2024, the board will be Esterling, Bales, Donley, Hoag, McNabb, and new members Dr. Bartholomew Hott and Tamara Trout.

The board unanimously voted to continue meeting every other month at 6:30 a.m. on the third Thursday, with Esterling saying it unnecessary to meet more often in the new year.

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## California storm

(Continued from Page 1)

Sven Dybdahl, owner of olive oil and vinegar store Viva Oliva in downtown Santa Barbara, said he had trouble finding dry routes to work Thursday morning, but most of the heavy rains and flooding had receded shortly before 11 a.m. He said he was grateful that the weather is only expected to be an issue for a few days at the tail end of the holiday shopping season, otherwise he'd be worried about how the rains would affect his store's bottom line.

"It will have an impact but thankfully it's happening quite late," he said.

By late afternoon, the city of Port Hueneme had lifted evacuation orders for residences on four streets. About 60 houses were affected by the orders, all in a senior citizen community, said Firefighter Andy VanSciver, a Ventura County fire spokesperson. An evacuation center was set up at a college gymnasium.

Three people from the senior community were taken to hospitals out of an abundance of caution, and there were multiple rescues of drivers from flooded vehicles, he said.

The city of Oxnard said in a social media post that many streets and intersections were heavily impacted. "Please stay off the city streets for the next several hours until the water recedes," the post said.

"This is a genuinely dramatic storm," climate scientist Daniel Swain,

of the University of California, Los Angeles, said in an online briefing. "In Oxnard, particularly, overnight there were downpours that preliminary data suggests were probably the heaviest downpours ever observed in that part of Southern California."

The National Weather Service issued a tornado warning for Oxnard and the city of Ventura at 1:28 a.m. due to a high-intensity thunderstorm, but no tornado activity was immediately observed, the Ventura County Sheriff's Office said in a social media post.

Hours later at Heritage Coffee and Gifts in downtown Oxnard, manager Carlos Larios said the storm hadn't made a dent in their Thursday morning rush despite "gloomy" skies.

"People are still coming in to get coffee, which is surprising," he said. "I don't think the rain is going to stop many people from being out and about."

The storm swept through Northern California earlier in the week as the center of the low-pressure system slowly moved south off the coast. Forecasters described it as a "cutoff low," a storm that is cut off from the general west-to-east flow and can linger for days, increasing the amount of rainfall.

The system was producing hit-and-miss bands of precipitation rather than generalized widespread rainfall. Forecasters said the low would wobble slightly away from the coast on Thurs-

day, drawing moisture away and allowing some sunshine, but will return.

The San Diego-area weather office warned that rather than fizzling, the storm was gathering energy and its main core would move through that region overnight through Friday morning.

Meanwhile, Californians were gearing up for holiday travel and finishing preparations for Christmas. The Automobile Club of Southern California predicted 9.5 million people in the region would travel during the year-end holiday period.

The Northeast was hit with an unexpectedly strong storm earlier this week, and some parts of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont were still digging out from rain and wind damage. Parts of Maine along the Androscoggin and Kennebec rivers were hit especially hard.

Floodwaters were receding throughout northern New England, though some localized areas were still in the flood stage, said Jon Palmer, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. Flood warnings were also still in effect in parts of Maine and New Hampshire, he said.

At least five people in East Coast states have died in the storms, with deaths reported in Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts and Maine.

The storm cut power to 400,000 customers in Maine, and restoration was still underway Thursday morning.

## Weather

Friday, December 22, 2023

(24-hour observations at 8:15 p.m. Thursday)

High: 50; Low: 31; Precipitation: None

Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 1.31 feet at 9:45 p.m. Thursday

## Wells County forecast

**Today:** A 40 percent chance of rain, mainly after 3 p.m. Cloudy, with a high near 49. South wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Tonight:** Rain, mainly after 7 p.m. Low around 41. South wind around 10 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph. Chance of precipitation is 90 percent. New precipitation amounts between a quarter and half of an inch possible.

**Saturday:** Rain likely, mainly before 10 a.m. Cloudy, with a high near 50. Southwest wind around 10 mph. Chance of precipitation is 60 percent.

**Saturday Night:** A 20 percent chance of rain before 1 a.m. Cloudy, with a low around 44. South wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Sunday:** Mostly cloudy, with a high near 58.

**Sunday Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 44.

**Christmas Day:** Rain likely, mainly after 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 57. Chance of precipitation is 60 percent.

**Monday Night:** Rain. Low around 48. Chance of precipitation is 80 percent.

**Tuesday:** Rain likely, mainly before 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 55. Chance of precipitation is 60 percent.

**Tuesday Night:** A 50 percent chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 39.

**Wednesday:** A 40 percent chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 48.

**Wednesday Night:** A chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 37.

**Thursday:** A slight chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 47.



### Saying hello

Indiana State Senator Andy Zay stopped by the News-Banner Thursday while in town for a visit with Mayor John Whicker. Zay is currently running for Congress in Indiana's third district. (Photo by Sydney Kent)

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## Foster families

(Continued from Page 1)

said Mónica Farías, who leads the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami. "We're actively recruiting parents."

Program leaders have been going to churches and other community organizations every weekend to find more families like Andy and Caroline Hazelton, Sol's foster parents.

Over the past four years, the Hazeltons — a couple in their early 30s living in a Miami suburb, with three biological daughters ages 8, 6 and almost 2 — have fostered five migrant minors for several months and more for shorter periods. Two teens were from Afghanistan, but most came from Central America.

"Our faith inspired us," Andy Hazelton said, adding they felt the need to respond to the Gospel exhortation of helping others as one would help Jesus when they heard about families being separated at the border.

Like other foster families, the Hazeltons say they focus not on the often stridently divisive politics of immigration, but simply on assisting children in need. A globe ornament on their living room Christmas tree is marked with dots for the birthplaces of each family member.

"Every Christmas we have new kids in our home," Caroline Hazelton said, adding that even the Muslim Afghan teens, who had never seen a stocking bulging with presents, quickly joined the festivities.

Like most youths in these programs, those boys were eventually reunited with their birth family — the mother hugged Caroline for ten minutes, sobbing in gratefulness. With Sol, whose father has gone missing on the journey across the desert, and other children without relatives in the United States, foster families' commitments can last years.

As Sol packed her school lunch in a "Stranger Things" bag under Cosmo's watchful eyes, the Hazeltons said they would be happy to have her stay forever and already refer to their four daughters.

Regardless of the length of stay, foster parents say they need to give the children enough stability to get comfortable with unfamiliar U.S. customs — from air conditioning to strict school routines — and to learn more English.

"We're never going to be like their parents. Thank God we live in a country where things can be easier," said Carlos Zubizarreta. A foster child himself 50 years ago, he's been a foster parent in the Miami area for

about 30 children over nearly two decades, in addition to having biological, now adult children.

Nevertheless, he always finds it hard when each foster child leaves after they've shared nightly dinners, vacations, and household tasks like car maintenance. Zubizarreta plans to continue to foster as long as he feels that is what God is calling him to do.

In Baltimore, Jason Herring has been a foster father for a year, to five children from Central America through a program run by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service that focuses on short-term care for those whose return to biological parents is being assessed by the government.

He says he is not religious — initially, he feared he wouldn't be accepted in the program for being gay. That led him to sympathize with the plight of children suffering because of adult

decisions they have no power over.

"I understand what it feels to be the other," he said. "You don't have to be a perfect parent, just be there."

Like all foster families, those taking in unaccompanied migrant children must be licensed by their state, and often receive extra training specific to immigration law and trauma, said Amanda Nosel, the Lutheran agency's program manager for foster care in Baltimore.

"There's certainly a national shortage in foster parents right now. We have so many kids who need homes," Nosel said.

Acclimating to a new country in a caring family setting is especially important given the deep and increasing level of trauma these children carry, from what they had to flee in their countries through the journey to the United States.

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OBITUARIES

**Tara Marie Azzara, 40**

Tara Marie Azzara, 40, of Bluffton, passed away unexpectedly from a stroke on Dec. 18, 2023. Tara was born Jan. 17, 1983, in Fort Wayne, to Gina Azzara Lamons. She graduated from Bluffton High School and went on to earn her degree in occupational therapy and criminal justice.



Surviving are her mother, two children, Landon Azzara of New Castle, and Gina Disheaux of Richmond; brother, Nick Dellinger of Toledo; grandmother, Sharon King; aunt, Marjorie Azzara Lister; and uncle, Matthew Gibson.

There will be no services, but she will live on through the donation of her organs. Arrangements are being handled by FairHaven Funeral Home of Fort Wayne.

**Frances "Jean" Gilliam, 89**

Frances "Jean" Gilliam, 89, of Bluffton, passed away Tuesday evening, Dec. 19, 2023, at Lutheran Hospital in Fort Wayne.

Jean was born in Wise, Va., Dec. 10, 1934, to Carlos and Emma (Bolling) Williams. She married Joe W. Gilliam in Wise, Va., on June 10, 1951; he preceded her in death Oct. 8, 2005.

Jean was a past member of the Primitive Baptist Church in Va. and currently had been attending Sonlight Wesleyan Church in Bluffton. She worked as a treasurer for the Bluffton Harrison Metropolitan School District for 27 years. She enjoyed traveling, camping, gardening, and boating at their lake home in Columbia City. She was also a member of a Bridge club and loved playing Bingo as well.

Survivors include two sons, James "Jim" (Cindy) Gilliam of Tampa, Fla., and Scott (Jenny) Gilliam of Bluffton; a daughter-in-law, Robin Gilliam of Evansville; two sisters, Carrol Strait of Fort Wayne, and Linda (Tom) Besing of Evansville; along with 10 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.

In addition to her parents and husband, Jean was preceded in death by a son, Steve Gilliam; and two brothers, Robert and Wendel Williams.

Visitation will be Thursday, Jan. 4, 2024, from 4:00 until 8:00 p.m., at Goodwin - Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel in Bluffton. Services will be held on Friday, Jan. 5, at 10:30 a.m., at the funeral home, with one hour of visitation prior to the service. Pastor Lyle Breeding will officiate. Burial will follow at I.O.O.F. Cemetery in Pennville.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Jean and Joe W. Gilliam Scholarship Fund, c/o the Wells County Foundation.

Online condolences may be made at [www.goodwin-cale-harnish.com](http://www.goodwin-cale-harnish.com).

# Three injured in Adams County buggy crash

On Wednesday, Dec. 20, the Adams County Sheriff's Office responded to a vehicle crash on SR 124 near CR 500E in Bluecreek Township.

Shayle M. Mann, 29, of Decatur, was driving a 2011 Chevrolet Avalanche traveling eastbound. Shayle told investigators that she observed faint lights ahead of her but thought because they were faint that they were some distance from her.

Shayle stated that she turned her attention from the road and when she turned it back, she was upon a horse and buggy also traveling eastbound. She had come upon it too quick to avoid a collision and was unable to swerve around it as there was oncoming traffic.

The buggy's operator, Samuel L. Schwartz, 54, and his passenger Mahlon S. Schwartz, 32, both of rural Decatur, were thrown from the buggy. The buggy was a total loss.

Both Mahlon and Samuel were transported to local hospitals for evaluation and treatment. Shayle was evaluated on scene by medics.

Deputies were assisted at the scene by an Indiana Conservation Officer, Monroe Fire and Adams Memorial EMS. The investigation is still ongoing.

# Indiana lawmakers admonish gambling regulation agency

By **LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ**  
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Key Republican lawmakers on Tuesday scolded the Indiana Gaming Commission over how it levies fines and more — threatening to take legislative action if changes aren't made.

The agency, meanwhile, said it has abided by its rules and statutes and listed accomplishments.

"It appears that the ideology is because casinos are profitable in Indiana, we should be able to fine them more," said Sen. Chris Garten, R-Charlestown. That profitability, he added, "doesn't give you the right."

Executive Director Greg Small responded that the purpose behind the agency's regulatory scheme is to drive compliance.

"And, by the way, we also have a mandate in statute that economic performance of the casinos and their hiring is of the utmost importance, and we certainly respect that," he said.

They spoke at a six-hour State Budget Committee meeting that included testi-

mony on a \$1 billion Medicaid hole and an opaque quasi-public economic development agency.

"I will suggest that you step up, get your house in order, and you circle back," said Sen. Ryan Mishler, R-Mishawaka.

The blistering hour-long discussion came as the IGC attempted to obtain "safe harbor" for regulations otherwise threatened by year-end deadlines in a Garten-sponsored overhaul approved last session.

The committee previously left the IGC off its November meeting agenda, prompting fears the agency would be unable to fulfill basic regulatory functions.

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# Police Notebook

**INCIDENTS**

**City:**

Wednesday, 3:26 p.m., Capri Meadows. Report of unusual smells from subjects apartment, caller concerned about possible methamphetamine use by neighbor.

Wednesday, 3:43 p.m., 100 block of West South Street. Caller reported that they were threatened.

Wednesday, 6:01 p.m., Washington Park. Report of a two dogs barking in the park. Dogs went home.

Wednesday, 7:08 p.m., 1200 Lancaster Street. Report of a missing 11-year-old boy, child located.

Wednesday, 8:29 p.m., 500 block of West Wiley Avenue. Caller requested welfare check for 13-year-old.

Wednesday, 8:59 p.m., Valley Park Apartments. Caller reported neighbors stole package delivered to her apartment. Officers went

to Walmart and purchased items for the subject using Bluffton Police Department Walmart gift card.

Wednesday, 9:11 p.m., Inteva Products. Caller requested trespass warning for man who did not understand that employment termination meant he should stop coming back.

Thursday, 6:37 a.m., Pak A Sad North. Caller reported injured cat in roadway. Cat was unfortunately DOA. Voicemail left for animal shelter.

Thursday, 8:47 a.m., North Main Street and West Madison Avenue. Caller reported someone spilled a ton of stones on the road. Literally. Traffic was obviously stopped while IMI employees and the city street department cleared the intersection.

Thursday, 9:47 a.m., Lowes. Report of harass-

ment.

Thursday, 11:40 a.m., 600 block of South Wayne Street. Report of man walking around taking pictures and looking in trash can.

Thursday, 12:03 p.m., Kroger. Officer out with subject with confirmed warrant in Florida, advised they will not extradite out of Florida.

Thursday, 12:35 p.m., Premier Flats. Report of smell of marijuana.

Thursday, 12:58 p.m., 400 block of West Lancaster Street. Report of abandoned house with unknown subject present.

**County:**  
Wednesday, 12:40 p.m., OFC Welfare Department, Bluffton. Subject reported fraud in the amount of \$1,200 after she purchased a sweater for her grandson online.

Wednesday, 3:17 p.m., 130 block of West 11th

Street, Warren. Officers executed warrant.

Wednesday, 3:48 p.m., Wells County Jail. Curtis Schorey transported to Miami Correctional Facility.

Wednesday, 8:08 p.m., South Meridian Road and 100 South, Bluffton. Caller reported semi trailer in ditch. A Plus called for assistance.

Thursday, 7:57 a.m., 7500 South 1000 West, Warren. Caller requested officer put down a deer that was injured and being attacked by coyotes.

Thursday, 9:19 a.m., 6800 Southeast Ind. 116, Bluffton. Car versus deer. Deer went through windshield. Driver reported bleeding from the head.

**ARRESTS**

Barry Mack Holzapfel, 63, Fort Wayne, failure to return to lawful detention, a Level 6 felony. Bond set at \$5,000.

# Indiana early learning committee recommends new child care standards

By **WHITNEY DOWNARD**

**Indiana Capital Chronicle**

The Early Learning Advisory Committee voted Wednesday to advance a new set of standards for evaluating child care centers around the state, with an anticipated three-year rollout starting in 2024.

Recommendations will be sent to relevant state divisions housed in the Family and Social Services Administration as well as the governor's office, which will move forward with implementation. The General Assembly tasked ELAC earlier this year with revising and replacing the current quality rating and improvement system, called Paths to QUALITY, and voting on new guidance by the end of 2023.

"It's supposed to help parents make good decisions in child care," Jeffrey Capizzano, the president of Policy Equity Group, told the committee. "This is all about supporting families and ... how families can navigate the child care system to find the type of child care that works best for them — both in terms of quality and in terms of other preferences that they might have."

ELAC engaged the Policy Equity Group, which has a \$172,000 state contract that includes both the ELAC work and streamlining child care licensing standards, to research and compile recommendations for consideration. The recommendations presented by Capizzano passed the committee unanimously.

**Considerations for recommendations**

Capizzano noted that families had a range of preferences when it came to child care, with some prioritizing collaboration and curiosity while others wanted reading-specific education. But beyond that, the state had a role in incentivizing providers to join the state's rating system to bolster state policies, such as reading proficiency.

A rating system is required for states to receive a federal Child Care and Development Block Grant and associated dollars can offset the prohibitive cost of child care for families. But ratings are voluntary for providers and many choose to operate unlicensed without public evaluations.

"We don't want to make our requirements actually limit the access of families to providers," Capizzano said. "The goal is going

towards participation."

In particular, FSSA staff rating child care centers receiving public funding needed to consider the level and quality of adult-child interactions alongside their curriculum and kindergarten readiness assessments.

A Level 1 facility, for example, will have met all of the minimum health and safety standards. To go beyond that baseline, providers would need to reach a certain level on adult-child interaction scores, provide evidence that they use a curriculum in all of their classrooms and evaluate child development and learning using the state's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

Levels 3 and 4 increase the level of scrutiny across the three core indicators.

Capizzano said that while the state can have a list of approved curricula, other states constantly update those lists with submissions from providers to allow for individuality that still meets a high educational standard.

"We want to make sure that ... we can offer a lot of autonomy to providers and the sort of curriculum choices that they have," Capizzano said.

Additionally, Capizzano said the state's program needed to be cognizant about provider limitations and work with them to improve their scores through something akin to Quality Enhancement grants, which can cover training and technical assistance.

Adding some sort of "micro-credentialing" to indicate if a specific teacher has training for children with disabilities or specializes in creative arts will strengthen family choice, she said.

"What we're recommending is not only to sort of have an overall rating but also some indication of the variation that is found within the classroom," Capizzano said.

In 2024, the state will

be tasked with designing a detailed implementation plan, finalizing the ratings systems and creating a communications plan for both families and providers. By 2025, Paths to QUALITY rating visits will be suspended in favor of the new system in a "practice year" to identify final snags.

Child care programs will be rated under the new system by 2026 and the Paths to QUALITY program will sunset once all participating providers have a new rating.

**Other committee considerations**

One future task ahead of the committee: finding ways to incentivize child care providers to increase wages for staff. An industry-wide staffing shortage, especially for trained staff, dampens center openings. Early Learning Indiana President and CEO Maureen Weber said her own organization had 15 percent of their classrooms closed due to staffing shortages.

"We're struggling to get teachers into the classroom and I don't want to move backwards," said Erin Don-

ovan, an early childhood professor and department chair at Ivy Tech Community College.

Donovan will head the subcommittee on workforce issues.

The workforce issue extends to the very raters hired to evaluate programs and FSSA's Courtney Hott, the director of ELAC, said. They couldn't rule out the possibility of needing to ask the General Assembly for additional funding in 2025 but would prioritize utilizing existing funding streams first.

Additionally, the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning, part of ELAC under FSSA, will compile a report on the federal grant dollars during the COVID-19 pandemic, some of which expired earlier this year.

Those monies helped FSSA offset the costs of background checks for providers, covered stabilization grants during the upheaval of pandemic-era closures and fund child care vouchers for impoverished families.

The next committee meeting will be Jan. 9, 2024.

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Christmas 2023 - a look through cartoonists' eyes...



Other Opinions

President Biden's drug-price boomerang

President Biden keeps trying to persuade Americans his policies are helping them, but voters aren't buying it. The latest example is the Inflation Reduction Act's (IRA) Medicare drug rebates, which are raising the cost of medicines.

The White House on Thursday proclaimed that the IRA's drug rebates are already saving seniors money: "President Biden's prescription drug law cracks down on price gouging from Big Pharma."

Under the IRA, drug makers must pay Medicare rebates if they raise list prices more than the rate of inflation. If a company increases the price of an immunotherapy by, say, 8 percent while inflation is increasing at 3 percent, it must pay Medicare the 5 percent difference. Co-insurance payments made by patients are then based on the inflation-adjusted price.

Rebates are deposited in the Medicare Supplementary Medical Insurance Fund, which is mainly financed by general tax revenue. In other words, politicians, not seniors, are the real beneficiary of the rebates.

According to the Administration, IRA drug rebates save seniors "as much as \$618 per average dose on 47 prescription drugs" (our emphasis). This is deceptive marketing. It's possible that Medicare co-insurance as a result of the IRA could be hundreds of dollars less on a cancer drug that costs tens of thousands of dollars per dose and whose list price increases by double digits. But most Medicare patients will see little benefit.

On the other hand, privately insured patients will likely pay much more for drugs owing to the rebates. Democrats tacitly conceded this when they drafted the law. They initially planned to apply the IRA inflation rebates to the private insurance market too. That's because employers worried that drug makers would offset the cost of the Medicare rebates by raising prices for their workers.

This is what has happened in Medicare with hospital and physician fees. Because Medicare typically pays less than the cost of care, providers charge privately insured patients more to compensate. Private health plans paid hospitals 224 percent of Medicare rates in 2020, according to a Rand Corp. study. Between 2013 and 2018, prices paid to providers increased at double the rate for commercial insurers as for Medicare fee for service.

Medicaid's mandatory rebates — 23.1 percent for brand drugs and 13 percent for generics off the average manufacturer price — save Medicaid tens of billions of dollars a year. But drug makers have raised prices that privately insured and Medicare patients pay to offset those Medicaid rebates, especially for drugs used mostly by low-income patients. Medicaid rebates have also reduced the already slim margins for making generic drugs, contributing to the current shortages.

Senate budget rules blocked Democrats from extending inflation rebates to private markets. So drug makers will invariably raise prices for privately insured patients and launch new drugs at higher prices. This may already be happening. Prescription drug prices have increased at a faster rate since the IRA passed, even as overall inflation has moderated.

Prescription drug prices increased by 2 percent during the Trump Presidency owing to greater generic competition, yet they've increased 5.5 percent so far under Mr. Biden. In November they rose at an annual rate of nearly 6 percent. Has the White House considered that the reason Americans don't believe that the President's policies have helped them is because they haven't?

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
Distributed by The Associated Press

Supreme Court should toss the Colorado case

With the Colorado Supreme Court's ruling disqualifying former president Donald Trump from appearing on the 2024 primary ballot, the U.S. Supreme Court now faces its greatest political challenge since *Bush v. Gore*.

Back then, the court's rush to intervene in the 2000 Florida recount stained its reputation, making it look like just another political actor in effectively awarding the presidency to George W. Bush.

But, unlike *Bush v. Gore*, the Supreme Court should take this case, which Trump has already announced he will appeal. Yes, once again, whatever the justices do will be interpreted through the distorting lens of partisanship. A decision that allows Trump to remain a candidate despite his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection — the most likely result, in my view — will be derided as the work of "partisan hacks," to use Justice Amy Coney Barrett's resonant phrase, siding with the party that appointed them.

That skepticism would be understandable, given the record of this court's aggressive conservative majority. But it would also be wrong, because Section 3 of the 14th Amendment should not be used to prevent Americans from voting to elect the candidate of their choice. The best outcome, for the court and the country, would be for a unanimous court — preferably an 8-0 court with Justice Clarence Thomas recusing himself — to clear the way for Trump to run.

To back up, Section 3 of the 14th Amendment provides that "no person shall ... hold any office, civil or military, under the United States ... who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States ... to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof."

Unlike the rest of the 14th Amendment, this post-Civil War provision, aimed at former Confederate officials, has been little used, then or in subsequent years. But Jan. 6, 2021, revived attention to the once-obscure provision, and challenges under Section 3 have been filed in multiple states.

On Tuesday, the Colorado Supreme Court found that Section 3 applies to Trump and therefore bars him from appearing on the state's March 5 presidential primary ballot. The court divided 4-3; all seven justices were appointed by Democratic governors.

A lower court had found that Trump engaged in insurrection but was not covered by Section 3 based on an implausible reading under which "officer of the United States" did not include the president. It defies logic to believe that the framers of the amendment meant to exclude former Confederate soldiers from all offices but the most important, and the Colorado Supreme Court was correct to disagree with this interpretation.

"President Trump asks us to hold that Section Three disqualifies every oath-breaking insurrectionist except the most powerful one and that it bars oath-breakers from virtually every office, both state and federal, except the highest one in the land," the majority wrote. "Both results are inconsistent with the plain language and history of Section Three."

But the majority agreed with the lower court that Trump's conduct amounted to engaging in insurrection under Section 3. "President Trump did not merely incite the insurrection," it said. "Even when the siege on the Capitol was fully underway, he continued to support it by repeatedly demanding that

Vice President Pence refuse to perform his constitutional duty and by calling Senators to persuade them to stop the counting of electoral votes. These actions constituted overt, voluntary, and direct participation in the insurrection."

The three dissenting justices each wrote separately. The most interesting came from Justice Carlos Samour Jr., who said barring Trump from the ballot without legislation from Congress implementing Section 3 violates Trump's due process rights, especially because Trump has not been charged with insurrection.

"More broadly, I am disturbed about the potential chaos wrought by an imprudent, unconstitutional, and standardless system in which each state gets to adjudicate Section Three disqualification cases on an ad hoc basis," Samour wrote. "Surely, this enlargement of state power is antithetical to the framers' intent."

Chaos indeed, which is why the high court needs to step in. Beyond what I think is the unconvincing avenue of text-parsing arguments about the meanings of "office" and "officer," the justices have two major potential off-ramps at their disposal.

One — and this would be my preference — involves the question Samour raised: whether Section 3 is self-executing. Here, the justices have the benefit of a decision by Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase in 1869 — the year after the 14th Amendment was ratified — that Section 3 requires enabling legislation.

In that case, from the days when justices rode the circuit, Chase ruled in the case of a formerly enslaved Black man who argued that his conviction for assault was void because the presiding judge had served in the Confederacy and was therefore disqualified from holding judicial office. Chase found that "legislation by Congress is necessary to give effect to the prohibition, by providing for such removal."

A second, more troubling, avenue would be for the justices to conclude, in opposition to the Colorado Supreme Court, that Trump's speech is protected by the First Amendment and therefore cannot be punished as insurrection. In the seminal 1969 case, *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, the court said that "mere advocacy" of violence can't be punished "except where such advocacy is directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action and is likely to incite or produce such action." Trump would surely seize on any such finding as vindication for his appalling behavior, which makes the Chase solution a better alternative.

But there is no world in which the justices are going to empower states to throw Trump off their ballots. Given that, the court should keep in mind: This is a moment it should aspire to be the unanimous court of *Brown v. Board of Education*, not the splintered, party-line body of *Bush v. Gore*.

On that score, it was fitting that the Colorado court's ruling arrived on the day of the memorial service for Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who was reliably reported to have regretted her vote with the *Bush v. Gore* majority.

"Probably the Supreme Court added to the problem at the end of the day," O'Connor told the *Chicago Tribune* in 2013. That is a good test for the current court. Will its eventual ruling — and one seems unavoidable — add to the problem or help resolve it?

Ruth Marcus is an associate editor and columnist for *The Washington Post*. [ruthmarcus@washpost.com](mailto:ruthmarcus@washpost.com).



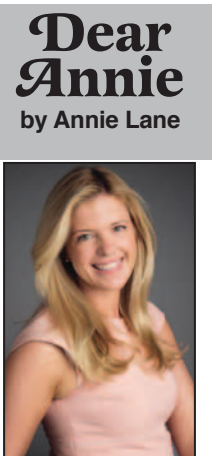
Ruth Marcus



Grumpy at the holidays

Dear Annie: I'm writing to respond to the post about "Godmother Goes Awry," in which a mother was very upset that a godmother would not co-sign for her daughter...

I have to be rude to get them to leave me alone. I don't miss the gift-giving or what I feel like are fake pleasantries. — The Grinch



Dear Annie by Annie Lane

Dear Grinch: The holidays, while full of spirit and cheer for many, can be extremely difficult and stressful for others. I'm sure the loved ones in your life who are requesting your presence at such gatherings genuinely mean well...

The key here is exactly what you said: clear and effective communication. The next time you receive an invite to something holiday related, say something along the lines of, "Thanks for thinking of me. I won't be able to make it, but I hope you have a great time, and I look forward to catching up with you in the new year..."

Wishing you peace and comfort this season.

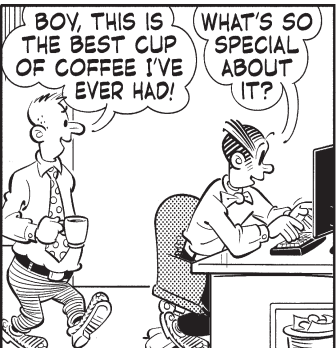
"How Can I Forget My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology — featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation — is available as a paperback and e-book. Visit http://www.creatorspublishing.com for more information...

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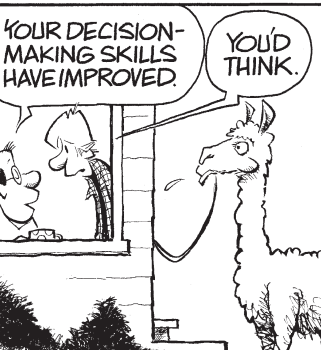
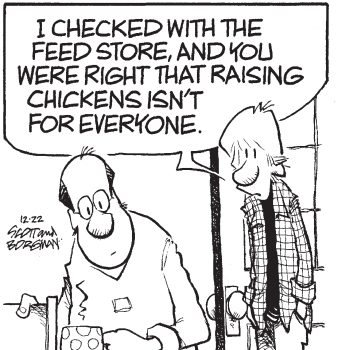
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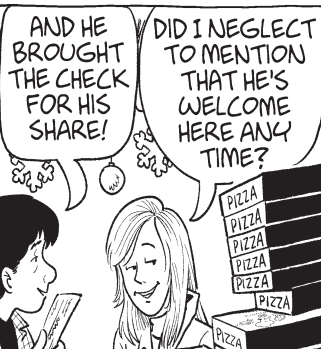
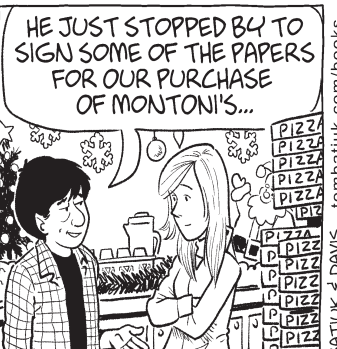
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My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



God gave His Son, the great Christmas gift, to the human race

"For this cause I was born" (John 18:37, NKJV). The Apostle Paul years later said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..."

Jesus' death had been prophesied thousands of years before. First, in Eden's garden. Then, Abraham foresaw His death as the lamb that was slain...

had power to lay down His life. Jesus faced the certainty of the cross far back in eternity. During all the ages that preceded His birth...

God gave His Son, the great Christmas gift, to the human race. To receive this gift we must humble ourselves, confess our sins, and turn to Christ by faith.

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

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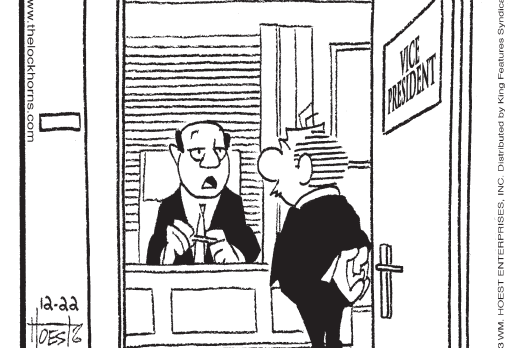
THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane



THE LOCKHORNS

By Eugene Sheffer



"Let's sing that — 'O Little Town of Bethle-hym!'"

"LOCKHORN, I'M AFRAID SITUATIONAL ETHICS REQUIRE THAT I BE BRUTALLY DISHONEST WITH YOU."

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid and clues for 12-22-23. Includes 40 numbered clues across, down, and in the solution grid.

Yesterday's answer 12-22. A crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-31 and corresponding answers from the previous day's puzzle.

Television schedule table for Friday, December 22, 2023. Columns include time slots (12:00 AM to 12:30 AM), channels (WINM, CBS, etc.), and program titles (3D Woman, Inside Edition, etc.).



# Liberty Center's Dick Harris to be inducted to the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame in 2024

Dick Harris of Liberty Center will be inducted into the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame in the 2024 class.

The banquet is scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, of next year at the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame Museum in New Castle. A banquet will follow later in the day at the Primo Banquet Hall in Indianapolis.

In his time at Liberty Center, Harris played basketball, baseball and track according to the Hall of Fame's website. He was well-known for his scoring abilities as he is still the record holder in school history with 1,000 points, and even played in a game that lasted nine overtimes.

After graduating from Liberty Center, Harris attended Manchester and continued

his athletic success. He was a four-time all-conference award winner, three-time all-NAIA district and All-American, scored 2,643 points and holds several records at the school.

He then went on to play 15 year's worth of independent professional basketball in the U.S. and in the FIBA.

Currently, Harris is living in his home in California.

For those who are interested in attending the banquet, reservations will soon be available online or through the mail early in 2024. You can call at (765) 529-1891, visit [www.hoopshall.com](http://www.hoopshall.com) or email at [info@hoopshall.com](mailto:info@hoopshall.com).

*This story is being republished due to a previous error.*

## High School Calendar

**FRIDAY, DEC 22**  
BOYS BASKETBALL: Norwell at Bluffton, 7:45 p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL: Garrett at Southern Wells, 7:30 p.m.

WRESTLING: Bluffton at ECIC Tournament (Jay County High School), 9 a.m.

**SATURDAY, DEC 23**  
GIRLS BASKETBALL: Lawrence North at Norwell, 3:30 p.m.

**MONDAY, DEC 25**  
No events scheduled

**TUESDAY, DEC 26**  
No events scheduled

**WEDNESDAY, DEC 27**  
BOYS BASKETBALL: Norwell at New Castle Holiday Tournament (vs. Decatur Central),

5:30 p.m. & Norwell vs. New Castle, 7:45 p.m.

**THURSDAY, DEC 28**  
BOYS BASKETBALL: Bluffton, Southern Wells at 1st Annual Holiday Tournament (Union City High School), 12 p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL: Norwell at Noblesville Holiday Tournament vs. Noblesville, 10 a.m.; Randolph Southern at Southern Wells, 7:30 p.m.

WRESTLING: Southern Wells at Spartan Classic, 9 a.m.

**FRIDAY, DEC 29**  
BOYS BASKETBALL: Bluffton, Southern Wells at 1st Annual Holiday Tournament (Union City High School), 4:30 p.m.

WRESTLING: Southern Wells at Spartan Classic, 9 a.m.

# Florida State to discuss future of athletics, affiliation with ACC at board meeting, AP source says

By RALPH D. RUSSO  
AP College Football Writer

Florida State will hold a Board of Trustees meeting on Friday and a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press the future of the athletic department and its affiliation with the Atlantic Coast Conference will be discussed.

The board is expected to consider a possible exit strategy that could involve legal action against the ACC and contracts that bind the conference's members for 12 more years, according to the person, who spoke Thursday on condition of anonymity because the school had not yet published an agenda for the meeting.

Florida State leaders have made it known they are unhappy with the school's current situation in the ACC, where revenue distribution lags way behind the payouts to schools in the Southeastern and Big Ten conferences. That gap is likely to grow substantially in the near future as new media rights deals kick in for the SEC and Big Ten while the ACC is locked into a deal with ESPN that still has more than a decade left.

"We are not satisfied with our current situation," Florida State President Rick McCullough said during an August board meeting.

Earlier this month, Florida State won the ACC football title game but became the first Power Five conference champion to finish with an undefeated record and still be left out of the College Football Playoff.

The snub of the Seminoles (13-0) for a playoff spot that went to SEC champion Alabama reignited frustrations at Florida State with what many of their supporters view as conference that holds back their athletic program — and most notably the football team.

Any ACC school that wants to leave the conference would have to challenge



the grant of rights to be able to get out before joining another league. The grant of rights, which runs through 2036, gives the ACC control over media rights for its member schools — including the broadcast of games in all sports.

In addition, any school that wants to leave the ACC would have to pay an exit fee of three times the league's operating budget, or roughly \$120 million.

The length of the ACC's agreement and potential financial penalties have protected the conference from being poached by other leagues the way the Big 12 and Pac-12 have been in the most recent round of realignment.

But it has also caused consternation in the conference as its members see a future where SEC and Big Ten schools are receiving upwards of \$75 million annually from their conferences and ACC schools are struggling to stay within \$30 million of their competitors.

"It'd be tough to run any other kind of company like this," FSU board chairman Peter Collins said in August.

Florida State is not the only ACC member concerned about the growing revenue gap, but it has been by far the most vocal.

The ACC has tried to address some of those concerns through a proposed new revenue distribution model that will reward schools for postseason success. The ACC also decided to expand, adding Stanford, California and SMU next year. All three schools agreed to join the conference at a reduced rate, with the extra money ESPN will pay for new members being directed into the bonus pool.

Florida State, along with Clemson and North Carolina, voted against expansion, but it was not enough to block the move approved by the other 12 members, including Notre Dame.

# Pistons drop 25th straight to move within loss of tying record

By DAVE HOGG  
Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Kelly Olynyk scored 25 points and the short-handed Utah Jazz beat Detroit 119-111 on Thursday night for the Pistons' 25th straight loss — one short of the NBA single season record.

The 2010-11 Cleveland Cavaliers and 2013-14 Philadelphia 76ers share the record at 26. The 76ers hold the overall mark at 28, a skid that started in the 2014-15 season and carried over into 2015-16.

"I want to be careful with my words, because this one hurts more than most of them," first-year coach Monty Williams said. "A team that played last night got (50) points off turnovers and rebounds. It is unbelievably hard to understand how we can get outworked in those categories."

The Pistons fell to 2-26, with the crowd chanting "Sell the team! Sell the team!" at the end in a loud statement to owner Tom Gores and his Platinum Equity firm. Detroit will be back in action Saturday night in Brooklyn.

"We're not 2-26 bad — no way are we that bad," said Cade Cunningham, who led Detroit with 28 points and 10 assists. "I think we can turn this around. We can play a much better brand of basketball."

Utah played without four of its top seven scorers — Lauri Markkanen, Jordan Clarkson, Keyonte George and Talen Horton-Tucker — on the second night of a back-to-back after losing at Cleveland on Wednesday.

"That's a really, really good team win for us," Jazz coach Will Hardy said. "That's a hard game to play — second night of a back-to-back on the road with a bunch of guys out."

Collin Sexton added 19 points for the Jazz Utah, and Ochai Agbaji had 18. Jaden Ivey added 24 points for Detroit, and Marvin Bagley III had 22, but no one else had more than eight.

Utah led 90-88 going into the fourth quarter and took advantage of Detroit's poor shooting to increase make it 100-93 with 7:40 to play.

The Pistons missed their first six 3-point attempts of the fourth, but Bojan Bogdanovic hit one to make it 104-100 with 4:40 left. Olynyk's 3-pointer against his former team put the Jazz up seven and Sexton's tip-in made it 115-106 with 1:37 to play.

Sexton added two free throws to make it an 11-point game.

The Pistons were 1 for 10 on 3s in the fourth quarter.

# Bluffton athletic games are going cashless for basketball

Bluffton High School would like to remind fans attending games that they are strictly debit or credit and will not be accepting cash.

Fans will still be able to pay upfront

at the ticket booth with their credit cards, just not cash.

The other way to purchase tickets is online at <https://blufftonathletics.com/> Tickets to find your event.

# Tigers fall to Falcons, just second loss this season in girls hoops

Bluffton fell on the road to the defending 3A girls' state champion Fairfield Falcons 42-25 on the road Thursday night.

The Tigers, now 12-2 on the season, were led by Isabella Stout with eight points. Haley Gibson scored six, Madyson Sonnigsen (5), Maryn Schreiber (4) and Tressa Renner (2).

Fairfield also won the junior varsity contest 41-25. Isla Gibson led the way with seven points, followed by Madelyn Funk (6), Addison Yates (5), Piper Morgan (3), and Savanna Hughett and Shak Eskridge (2).

Bluffton will host Belmont starting at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 30.

# Zach Edey scores 18 points as Purdue breezes past Jacksonville

By MARK AMBROGI  
Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (AP) — Zach Edey scored 18 points and No. 1 Purdue avoided a let-down, breezing past Jacksonville 100-57 on Thursday night.

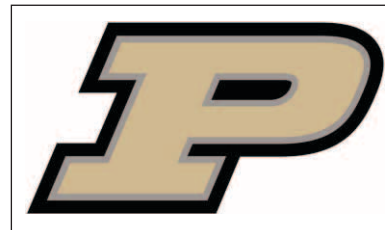
Lance Jones had 16 points, Trey Kaufman-Renn scored 15 and Myles Colvin had 11 for the Boilermakers (11-1), who won their fourth straight — including last Saturday's win over then-No. 1 Arizona that allowed them to regain the top ranking.

"I'm proud of our guys to bounce back from emotional state and kind of keep a purpose," Purdue coach Matt Painter said. "Tonight I thought we did a good job of sticking to our job."

It was the final game for the Boilermakers before a weeklong holiday break.

"You know everybody's mind is on going home and spending time with their family and loved ones," Jones said. "Coach Painter stressed to practice to have the right mindset. It took us a little bit but once we got going and stayed locked in, we went ahead and finished it off."

Twelve players scored for Purdue. Seldom-used Will Berg, who was playing in just his fifth game this season, had eight points in the closing minutes Painter substituted liberally. The Boilermakers held a 43-16 edge in bench scoring.



Robert McCray V led the Dolphins (8-5) with 22 points. He came in as Jacksonville's leading scorer with a 16.5-point average.

The 7-foot-4 Edey had a team-high eight rebounds as Purdue finished with a 39-31 advantage.

Purdue shot 52% from the field while holding the Dolphins to 37%. Jacksonville committed 21 turnovers, 12 more than Purdue.

The Boilermakers led from the tip, but were ahead just 32-24 with 4:58 remaining in the first half. Purdue finished the half with a 13-3 run to take a 45-27 lead.

"I thought our guys played well in that stretch and executed," Painter said. "With five minutes left, we had nine turnovers and it stayed at nine."

Purdue started the second half with a 12-0 spurt, extending its advantage to 30 points.

Kaufman-Renn said he had plenty of motivation against the visitors from the Atlantic Sun Conference.

"These are the type of teams we've lost to (in) March Madness, so I was just as motivated as playing Arizona," Kaufman-Renn said. "So I don't want that to happen again."

### NEXT UP

Purdue: Hosts Eastern Kentucky on Dec. 29 to conclude its nonconference schedule.



# Penske threeppeat a potential theme for NASCAR in 2024

By PETE IACOBELLI  
AP Sports Writer

Roger Penske achieved something this season the pioneering motorports magnate had never done in his long, accomplished career with back-to-back NASCAR championships.

Ryan Blaney gave Penske consecutive series titles at Phoenix last month after teammate Joey Logano's title-winning run in 2022.

"You win one, and you start all over again," Penske said. "They don't give you an extra lap ahead of everybody after you win one. Last year, Joey did a great job, and by the way when you think about it, last year at Phoenix, if you watched it, Ryan was a good wing man. He had a fast car at Phoenix, so we knew that he had the speed."

That showed throughout this past season as Blaney won three times, including twice in the playoffs and was fastest when it counted most with eight top 10 finishes in the final 12 races.

Blaney was gushing after his championship after starting in a pair of Penske firsts: Winning the Coca-Cola 600 to combine with Josef Newgarden's Indianapolis 500 win on Memorial Day weekend and then earning that NASCAR crown.

"You don't get to do that often, do something for Roger that he hasn't done before, and to be able to bring that to him is definitely very special," Blaney said.

Count on Blaney and Logano to go hard after a Penske three-peat when the season kicks off next season.

### BANGED UP

A couple of other title contenders in Denny Hamlin and Chase Elliott will bear watching after offseason surgeries.

Hamlin had said 2023 was his year before getting eliminated from contention in the next-to-last race of the season. He had shoulder surgery in November that he said was more complicated than expected. Hamlin said it will affect offseason preparations headed into next year.

(Continued on Page 7)

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News-Banner Scoreboard

BASKETBALL High School

Thursday Boys' Scores
Batesville 62, S. Ripley 42
E. Central 53, Oxford Talawanda, Ohio 35
Ft. Wayne Concordia 50, NorthWood 35
Highland 49, Wheeler 26
Indpls Ben Davis 76, Pinson Valley, Ala. 52
LaPorte 63, Elkhart 60
Mooreville 73, Monrovia 64
N. Decatur 56, Jac-Cen-Del 48
N. Vermilion 67, Clinton Central 51
Parke Heritage 67, S. Putnam 46
S. Decatur 53, S. Dearborn 47
Shoals 55, Crawford Co. 45
Terre Haute North 58, Evansville Memorial 54
Valparaiso 61, Hammond Noll 58
W. Lafayette 45, Western 30
Bi County Tournament
First Round
Fountain Central 68, Attica 14
Central Christian Tournament
First Round
Indpls Irvington 71, Horizon Christian 60
Delphi Classic
Consolation
Delphi 56, Pioneer 45
North Daviess Tournament
First Round
Brownstown 86, South Knox 49
Evansville Christian 53, Paoli 46
N. Daviess 34, Forest Park 32
Scottsburg 53, Loogootee 43
Thursday Girls' Scores

Avon 69, Indy Brebeuf 59
Bethany Christian 46, Argos 44
Caston 53, Frontier 20
Eastern Hancock 66, Monroe Central 35
Eastside 60, Heritage 22
Evansville Christian 45, Muhlenberg County, Ky. 32
Evansville Reitz 71, Mt. Carmel, Ill. 40
Fairfield 42, Bluffton 25
Forest Park 55, McLean Co., Ky. 26
Franklin Central 68, Columbus North 61
Ft. Wayne Blackhawk 44, Garrett 40
Ft. Wayne Snider 72, Ft. Wayne Luers 35
Griffith 40, River Forest 23
Hamilton Hts. 58, Blackford 26
Henderson Co., Ky. 42, Evansville Memorial 37
Heritage Hills 53, Pike Central 30
Kokomo 32, Northwestern 31
Lebanon 45, Beech Grove 38
New Palestine 60, Southport 22
New Prairie 48, Michigan City Marquette 36
Oregon-Davis 58, Westville 56
Southwestern (Hanover) 35, East-ern (Pekin) 31
Washington 72, Boonville 41
Bi County Tournament
First Round
Fountain Central 29, Attica 15
Delphi Tournament
Consolation
Frankfort 59, Taylor 36
Edinburgh Tournament
Championship
Austin 47, Northside 40
Fifth Place
Indpls Lutheran 50, Edinburgh 33

College

Men's Basketball Scores
Thursday, Dec. 21
Penn St. 72, Le Moyne 55
Kentucky 95, Louisville 76
Akron 94, Gardner-Webb 90, OT
Bradley 75, SIU-Edwardsville 64
Cent. Michigan 75, Detroit 63
Cleveland St. 90, W. Michigan 77
E. Michigan 72, Hampton 69
IUPUI 90, Defiance 67
Indiana 83, North Alabama 66
Michigan St. 99, Stony Brook 55
Minnesota 80, Ball St. 63
Ohio St. 78, New Orleans 36
Purdue 100, Jacksonville 57
Youngstown St. 75, Navy 65
Women's Basketball Scores
Thursday, Dec. 21
Northwestern 72, Temple 68
Ball St. 52, Georgia 51
Baylor 73, South Florida 50
Akron 68, Bellarmine 65
Arkansas 66, Ill. Chicago 58
Butler 69, Ohio 49
Cincinnati 71, Siena 51
Detroit 72, Florida A&M 66
Fort Wayne 77, Aquinas College 43
Iowa 98, Loyola Chicago 69
Miami (Ohio) 68, Oakland 66, OT
Minnesota 100, Lindenwood (Mo.) 45
Notre Dame 84, W. Michigan 47
SE Missouri 74, Evansville 44
Wisconsin 76, E. Illinois 64

Penske threPEAT

(Continued from Page 6)
Elliott had shoulder surgery to repair a torn labrum and he believes he'll be ready for next year. He missed six races in 2023 after injuring his leg snowboarding.
A healthy Elliott should make Hendrick Motorsports as strong as ever. Past champion Kyle Larson and William Byron combined for 10 victories and finished second and third in the series standings.
TUNING IN
NASCAR fans will have several new streaming ways to watch after the sport's seven-year media rights deal that includes Amazon, TNT and Max. The new arrangement is worth \$7.7 billion when a previously announced \$1.1 billion contract with CW is figured in, according to the Sports Business Journal. NASCAR has not detailed the con-

tract's value.
BIGGEST SURPRISE
Roush Fenway Keselowski Racing's revival under ex-series champion Brad Keselowski, an owner who helped Jack Roush's once-great program return to prominence this season. The program got drivers Chris Buescher and Keselowski into the playoffs with Buescher winning three races and advancing to the final eight.
BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT
Kevin Harvick rode through his final NASCAR season without a victory, despite tributes and remembrances at almost every stop on the circuit. The Stewart-Haas driver came close, winding up second behind William Byron at Darlington in May. Harvick ends his career with 60 wins and a record 14 straight playoff appearanc-

es, along with a 2014 series championship.
TOP ROOKIE
Ty Gibbs, Joe Gibbs' grandson, was the 2022 Xfinity Series champion and backed that up by winning rookie of the year in his first full Cup Series season driving his granddad's No. 54 car. The 21-year-old Gibbs had nine top-10 finishes this past season with his best showing a fourth at the Royal course in Charlotte last October.
RETIREMENT AGE?
Martin Truex Jr., the 2017 NASCAR champion, thought about stepping out of the cockpit of the No. 19 Joe Gibbs Racing car at age 43 before signing a one-year extension. Several times during the year, Truex sounded like a racer ready to join contemporaries Jeff Gordon, Dale Earnhardt Jr. and now Harvick outside the NASCAR garage.

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1 7 4
9 7
2 9 6 3 4
7 5 8
2 9 4 5
9 4 8 3
2

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Lottery Numbers

Thursday's Drawings HOOSIER LOTTERY
Cash 5 — 04-11-13-19-27
Cash4Life — 01-10-11-36-38, Cash Ball: 01
Quick Draw Midday — 01-06-10-19-22-25-29-34-36-42-43-46-48-51-53-54-56-62-65-77, BE: 65
Daily Three-Midday — 01-04-04, SB: 02
Daily Three-Evening — 04-06-03, SB: 08
Daily Four-Midday — 03-06-04-04, SB: 02
Daily Four-Evening — 00-03-09-08, SB: 08
Quick Draw Evening — 01-08-12-17-22-24-25-26-29-35-47-48-52-53-55-59-63-71-74-80, BE: 08
Hoosier Lotto — Estimated jackpot (for Saturday): \$1.6 million
MEGA MILLIONS
Estimated jackpot (for Friday): \$57 million
POWERBALL
Estimated jackpot (for Saturday): \$620 million

SUDOKU ANSWER

6 9 7 8 2 9 8 1 7 6
2 4 8 1 9 7 6 9
8 9 1 4 7 6 9 2 8
1 2 8 6 3 7 9 9 4
7 8 9 1 9 4 6 8 2
4 6 9 5 8 2 1 8 7
8 8 6 7 4 1 2 9 9
9 1 4 2 9 8 8 7 6
9 7 2 9 6 8 4 1 8

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414 N MERIDIAN ST. PORTLAND, IN 47371 NEW YEAR'S DAY EXTRAVAGANZA SALE! Large 2 Ring Auction! Live & Simulcast Auction. Ring 1 - Antiques, Primitives, Silver Certificates, Vintage Toys, Cast Iron, Furniture, Appliances, Coca-Cola items, pocket knives, costume jewelry, musical instruments. Ring 2 - 2023 Bad Boy Tractors w/ loaders, 2018 Polaris side by side, 2012 Honda motorcycle, 2016 Kawasaki, 2019 Triumph, older International tractor, several firearms, ammo, new Home Depot items, pedal tractors, vintage games, fishing and more! Preview will be Friday, December 29 from 3 to 5. Go to bidbricker.com to start bidding! Chad Bricker Auctioneer - 260-703-0839 AU11600027 Jan. 01 10:00 AM-5:30 PM Rain or Shine

EMPLOYMENT

Help Wanted

THE TOWN OF Warren is now accepting applications for Operations Manager to oversee all departments of the Town - Water, Sewer, Electric, Street, Park as well as any other duties which could/would be assigned through the Town Council related to Public Works operations. Prior Municipal Work Experience, Managerial Experience, and at least one License preferred but all three not required. Wage based on experience level. Applications can be found online at warrenindiana.us or picked up at Town Hall, 132 N. Wayne Street. Applications and resumes will be accepted until January 15, 2024. Call 260-375-2656 for further information. Town of Warren, Indiana, is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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HELOISE HINT: If you haven't figured out what you want your career to be. Start with an internship that's in an industry you're curious about. A temporary job may give you an idea of what the work is all about. Email HELOISE@Heloise.com.

Help Wanted

THE TOWN OF Warren is now accepting applications for a general labor position serving all departments of the Town - Water, Electric, Sewer, Street, and Park as well as any other duties which could/would be assigned under Town operations. Prior Municipal work experience, background in electric work, and/or licensing preferred but not necessary to be considered. Applications can be found online at warrenindiana.us or picked up at Town Hall, 132 N. Wayne Street and will be accepted until January 15, 2024. Call 260-375-2656 for further information. Town of Warren, Indiana, is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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PHH MORTGAGE )
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PLAINTIFF )
CAUSE NO: )
90C01-2311-MF-000023 )
)
) VS )
JEREMY A. SMITH, DECEASED; )
C.S.; UNKNOWN HEIRS )
AND/OR DEVISEES OF )
JEREMY A. SMITH, DECEASED; )
ESTATE OF JEREMY A. SMITH, )
DECEASED )
DEFENDANTS )

NOTICE OF SUIT

To the defendants above named, and any other person who may be concerned.

You are notified that you have been sued in the Court above named.

The nature of the suit against you is the foreclosure of a mortgage upon the property legally described as follows:

Part of the NW 1/4 of the NE 1/4 of Section 26, Township 28 North, Range 12 East, Wells County, Indiana; more particularly described as follows:

Commencing at a point at the NW Corner of the NE 1/4 of Section 26, T28N, R-12E; thence Southerly, Four Hundred Twenty-Two and No Tenths Feet (422.0') to the point of beginning; thence S 73 degrees 11' E, Ninety-Six and No Tenths Feet (96.0') to a point; thence N 79 degrees 39' E, One Hundred Eighty-Seven and Eight Tenths feet (187.8') to a point; thence N 65 degrees 35' E, One Hundred Eighty-One and One Tenths Feet (181.1') to a point; thence N 57 degrees 14' E, Two Hundred Thirty-Six and Three Tenths Feet (236.3') to a point; thence N 50 degrees 29' E, Two Hundred Sixty-Three and Eight Tenths Feet (263.8') to a point; thence N 31 degrees 14' E, Fifty-Three and Nine Tenths Feet (53.9') to a point on the North Section Line; thence Westerly, Eight Hundred Sixty-Nine and Four Tenths Feet (869.4') to the point of commencing; thence Southerly 422.0' to the point of beginning. Containing 6.06 Acres.

Commonly known as: 4524 East 800 North Ossian, IN 46777

This summons by publication is specifically directed to the following defendant(s) whose whereabouts are unknown.

Unknown Heirs and/or Devisees of Jeremy A. Smith, Deceased
Estate of Jeremy A. Smith, Deceased

In addition to the above-named defendants being served by this summons, there may be other defendants who have an interest in this lawsuit.

An answer or other appropriate response must be filed to the Complaint must be written either by you or your attorney with the Clerk of the Court for Wells County at: Clerk of Wells County Courthouse, 102 West Market Street Bluffton, IN 46714

on or before the 21st day of January, 2024, (the same being thirty (30) days after the Third Notice of Suit), and if you fail to do so a judgment may be entered against you for what the plaintiff has demanded.

Codilis Law, LLC Electronically Signed by: /s/ Robert S. Kruszynski 15488-45

ATTEST: Clerk, Wells Circuit Court Attorney for Plaintiff Codilis Law, LLC 8050 Cleveland Place Merrillville, IN 46410 (219) 736-5579 15-23-01393

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Public Sale Calendar

DECEMBER 23-JANUARY 1 - Online only auction - Various consignors, seller. Modeline MCM floor & table lamps and Art Nuevo, Presidential collection, advertising, toys, early Moxie thermometer, 25+ Nativity scenes, antiques, vintage primitives, artifacts, trains, Fenton, Haviland & Franciscan china, antique furniture, military items, salesman samples and miniatures, coins & currency. Preview: Dec. 26 from 3 p.m.-6 p.m. and Dec. 28 from 3 p.m.-6 p.m., 102 South Jefferson, Ossian. Sale manager, Rod Fetters. The Steffen Group Inc., 260-824-3006, www.steffengrp.com. BIDDING NOW OPEN AND STARTS CLOSING DECEMBER 27 - 10 a.m. EST - Whites Meat Market, owner. Complete liquidation. Meat saws, scales, display coolers, retail shelving, stainless sinks and tables, Herring Hall Marvin safe and much more! Auction pick up Dec. 29, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. EST, 46 W 400 S #1, Kokomo, IN. Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC, 260-724-7402, Kjauction.com. DECEMBER 31-JANUARY 7 - Estate of Mary Lynn Lautzenheiser, seller. Personal property online only auction. John Deere mower, lawn & garden, furniture, Christmas, books, household. Open houses: Jan. 4 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Jan. 6 from 10 a.m. to noon, 4917 E 100 N., Bluffton, IN. Isaac Stoller, sale manager, The Steffen Group Inc., http://www.steffengrp.com, 260-824-3006. JANUARY 11 - 6 p.m. - Estate of Mary Lynn Lautzenheiser, seller. 4917 E. 100 N., Bluffton, IN. One-of-a-kind property w/quick access to Bluffton, Decatur, Fort Wayne. Main home was once township school building, and has covered porch walk through to previous dance studio that has potential to be fourth living unit. Property also offers detached two car garage and

two-unit apartment building. Open houses: Jan. 4 from 4-6 p.m., Jan. 6 from 10 a.m.-noon. Isaac Stoller, sale manager, The Steffen Group Inc., http://www.steffengrp.com, 260-824-3006. JANUARY 12 - 10 a.m. - Secured creditors & various consignors, owners. 815 Adams St., Decatur. Online only truck and equipment auction. Online bidding only. Offering 500+ lots! 2012-2014 Freightliner M2106 box trucks, dump trucks, day cabs, sleepers, utility trucks, bucket trucks, utility & semi trailers, SUV's, pickup trucks, 250+ various skid steer attachments, various truck parts, fencing, work benches, tool boxes and much more! Accepting consignments! Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC, 260-724-7402, Kjauction.com. BIDDING NOW OPEN AND STARTS CLOSING JANUARY 17 - 6 p.m. EST. - Gary Meyer, owner. Online only commercial real estate auction! 1,376 sq. feet building, 2 bay service area, 15'x16' office space, paved parking lot, .46 acre triangle lot located on N. Main Street, (Hwy. 27)! Zoned: Commercial. Year built: 1950. Wabash Township, Section 29, Adams County, Indiana, South Adams School Corp. Auction preview Jan. 8, 4-5 p.m. or by appointment, 617 N. Main St., Geneva. Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC, 260-724-7402, Kjauction.com.

Public Notices

NOTICE The following will be sold for charges: 815 W WASHINGTON ST BLUFFTON On 01/09/2024 @ 10:00 AM 2012 CHEVROLET 1GCRCPX6C2Z95327 \$2,295.00 nb 12/22 hspaxlp

Lancaster Township, Wells County Indiana

The Lancaster Township Board will be having a meeting on Wednesday Jan. 3, 2024 at 6:00 PM at the Lancaster Township Office located at 915 N Main Street, Bluffton Indiana. Agenda: Approval of Minutes Update On Fire Territory Update on Craigville Cemetery Year End discussion New Year Policy Adoptions Other business related to Lancaster Township

David Rigney Lancaster Township Trustee 915 N. Main Street Bluffton, IN 46714 260-824 9501 Office 260-760-0501 Cell

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# Israel's campaign in Gaza seen as among most destructive in history

By JULIA FRANKEL  
Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military campaign in Gaza, experts say, now sits among the deadliest and most destructive in history.

In just over two months, the offensive has wreaked more destruction than the razing of Syria's Aleppo between 2012 and 2016, Ukraine's Mariupol or, proportionally, the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II. It has killed more civilians than the U.S.-led coalition did in its three-year campaign against the Islamic State group.

The Israeli military has said little about what kinds of bombs and artillery it is using in Gaza. But from blast fragments found on-site and analyses of strike footage, experts are confident that the vast majority of bombs dropped on the besieged enclave are U.S.-made. They say the weapons include 2,000-pound "bunker-busters" that have killed hundreds in densely populated areas.

With the Palestinian death toll in Gaza approaching 20,000, the international community is calling for a cease-fire. Israel vows to press ahead, saying it wants to destroy Hamas' military capabilities following the militant group's Oct. 7 cross-border rampage that triggered

the war, in which it killed 1,200 people and took 240 others hostage.

The Biden administration has quietly continued to supply arms to Israel. Last week, however, President Joe Biden publicly acknowledged that Israel was losing international legitimacy for what he called its "indiscriminate bombing."

Here's a look at what is known so far about Israel's campaign on Gaza.

## How much destruction is there in Gaza?

Israel's offensive has destroyed over two-thirds of all structures in northern Gaza and a quarter of buildings in the southern area of Khan Younis, according to an analysis of Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite data by Corey Scher of the CUNY Graduate Center and Jamon Van Den Hoek of Oregon State University, experts in mapping damage during wartime.

The percentage of damaged buildings in the Khan Younis area nearly doubled in just the first two weeks of Israel's southern offensive, they said.

That includes tens of thousands of homes as well as schools, hospitals, mosques and stores. U.N. monitors have said that about 70 percent of school buildings across Gaza have been damaged. At least 56 damaged schools served as shelters for displaced civil-

ians. Israeli strikes damaged 110 mosques and three churches, the monitors said.

Israel holds Hamas responsible for civilian deaths by embedding militants in civilian infrastructure. Those sites also shelter multitudes of Palestinians who have fled under Israeli evacuation orders.

"Gaza is now a different color from space. It's a different texture," said Scher, who has worked with Van Den Hoek to map destruction across several war zones, from Aleppo to Mariupol.

## How does the destruction stack up historically?

By some measures, destruction in Gaza has outpaced Allied bombings of Germany during World War II.

Between 1942 and 1945, the allies attacked 51 major German cities and towns, destroying about 40-50 percent of their urban areas, said Robert Pape, a U.S. military historian. Pape said this amounted to 10 percent of buildings across Germany, compared to over 33 percent across Gaza, a densely populated territory of just 140 square miles.

"Gaza is one of the most intense civilian punishment campaigns in history," said Pape. "It now sits comfortably in the top quartile of the most devastating bombing campaigns ever."

The U.S.-led coalition's 2017 assault to expel the Islamic State group from the Iraqi city of Mosul was considered one of the most intense attacks on a city in generations. That nine-month battle killed around 10,000 civilians, a third of them from coalition bombardment, according to an Associated Press investigation at the time.

During the 2014-2017 campaign to defeat IS in Iraq, the coalition carried out nearly 15,000 strikes across the country, according to Airwars, a London-based independent group that tracks recent conflicts. By comparison, the Israeli military said last week it has conducted 22,000 strikes in Gaza.

## What types of bombs are being used?

The Israeli military has not specified what it is using. It says every strike is cleared by legal advisers to make sure it complies with international law.

"We choose the right munition for each target — so it doesn't cause unnecessary damage," said the army's chief spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari.

Weapons experts have been able to draw conclusions by analyzing blast fragments found on-site, satellite images and videos circulated on social media. They say the findings offer only a peek into the full scope of the air war.

So far, fragments of American-made Joint Direct Attack Munitions bombs and smaller diameter bombs have been found in Gaza, according to Brian Castner, a weapons investigator with Amnesty International.

The JDAM bombs include precision-guided 1,000- and 2,000-pound "bunker-busters."

"It turns earth to liquid," said Marc Garlasco, a former Pentagon defense official and a war crimes investigator for the U.N. "It pancakes entire buildings."

He said the explosion of a 2,000-pound bomb in the open means "instant death" for anyone within about 100 feet. Lethal fragmentation can extend for up to 1,200 feet.

In an Oct. 31 strike on the urban refugee camp of Jabaliya, experts say a 2,000-pound bomb killed over 100 civilians.

Experts have also identified fragments of SPICE (Smart, Precise Impact, Cost-Effective) 2000-pound bombs, which are fitted with a GPS guidance system to make targeting more precise.

The Israeli military is also dropping unguided "dumb" bombs. Several experts pointed to two photos posted to social media by the Israeli Air Force at the start of the war showing fighter jets stocked with unguided bombs.

# Rudy Giuliani files for bankruptcy days after being ordered to pay \$148 million in defamation case

NEW YORK (AP) — Rudy Giuliani filed for bankruptcy on Thursday, acknowledging severe financial strain exacerbated by his pursuit of former President Donald Trump's lies about the 2020 election and a jury's verdict last week requiring him to pay \$148 million to two former Georgia election workers he defamed.

The former New York City mayor listed nearly \$153 million in existing or potential debts, including almost \$1 million in state and federal tax liabilities, money he owes lawyers, and many millions of dollars in potential judgments in lawsuits against him. He estimated he had assets worth \$1 million to \$10 million.

Giuliani had been teetering on the brink of financial ruin for several years, but the eye-popping damages award to former election workers Ruby Freeman and Wandrea "Shaye" Moss pushed him over the edge. The women said Giuliani's targeting of them after Republican Trump narrowly lost Georgia to Democrat Joe Biden led to death threats that made them fear for their lives.

Ted Goodman, a political adviser and spokesperson for Giuliani, said in a statement that Giuliani's

decision to seek bankruptcy protection "should be a surprise to no one" because "no person could have reasonably believed that Mayor Giuliani would be able to pay such a high punitive amount."

The Chapter 11 filing will give Giuliani "the opportunity and time to pursue an appeal, while providing transparency for his finances under the supervision of the bankruptcy court, to ensure all creditors are treated equally and fairly throughout the process," Goodman said.

But declaring bankruptcy likely won't erase the \$148 million verdict. Bankruptcy law doesn't allow for the dissolution of debts that come from a "willful and malicious injury" inflicted on someone else. A judge said Wednesday that Freeman and Moss could start pursuing payment immediately, saying any delay could give Giuliani time to hide assets.

"This maneuver is unsurprising, and it will not succeed in discharging Mr. Giuliani's debt to Ruby Freeman and Shaye Moss," their lawyer, Michael Gottlieb, said.

After the verdict, Giuliani repeated his stolen election claims, insisted he did nothing wrong and suggested he'd keep pressing his

claims even if it meant losing all his money or going to jail. His rhetoric prompted Freeman and Moss to sue him again this week.

The Dec. 15 verdict was the latest and costliest sign of the mounting financial toll incurred by the 79-year-old Giuliani, a one-time Republican presidential candidate and high-ranking Justice Department official once heralded as "America's Mayor" for his calm and steady leadership after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

Once swimming in cash as a globetrotting security consultant, Giuliani's money woes intensified amid investigations, lawsuits, fines, sanctions and damages related to his work helping Trump try to overturn the 2020 election.

Among his potential debts, he listed lawsuits brought by two voting machine manufacturers who say he and others defamed them with claims of a stolen election.

A lawyer for Giuliani, Adam Katz, suggested at an August court hearing in one of those cases that Giuliani was "close to broke," and unable to pay a number of bills, including a \$12,000 to \$18,000 tab for a company to search through his electronic records for evidence.

# Jury acquits 3 Washington state officers in death of Black man who told them he couldn't breathe

TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — A jury cleared three Washington state police officers of all criminal charges Thursday in the 2020 death of Manuel Ellis, a Black man who was shocked, beaten and restrained face-down on a Tacoma sidewalk as he pleaded for breath.

Two of the officers — Matthew Collins, 40, and Christopher Burbank, 38 — had been charged with second-degree murder and manslaughter, while Timothy Rankine, 34, was charged with manslaughter. Their attorneys argued that Ellis died from a lethal amount of methamphetamine that was in his system as well as a preexisting heart condition, not from the officers' actions, and the jury found the three not guilty on all counts.

There was a gasp from the gallery when the first not-guilty verdict was read. Rankine sat forward in his seat and wiped his eyes, while Collins hugged his lawyer.

Matthew Ericksen, a lawyer representing the Ellis family, said it was hard to convey how devastating the verdict was for the family and community.

"The biggest reason why I personally think this jury found reasonable doubt is because the defense was essentially allowed to put Manny Ellis on trial," Ericksen said via email. "The defense attorneys were allowed to dredge up Manny's past and repeat to the jury again and again Manny's prior arrests in 2015 and 2019. That unfairly prejudiced jurors against Manny."

Ellis was walking home with doughnuts from a 7-Eleven in Tacoma, about 30 miles south of Seattle, late on March 3, 2020, when he passed a patrol car stopped at a red

light, with Collins and Burbank inside.

The officers claimed they saw Ellis try to open the door of a passing car at the intersection and he became aggressive when they tried to question him about it. Collins testified that Ellis demonstrated "superhuman strength" by lifting him off the ground and throwing him through the air.

But three witnesses who testified said they saw no such thing, reporting that they did not see Ellis try to strike or do anything that would provoke the officers. After what appeared to be a brief conversation between Ellis and the officers, who are both white, Burbank, in the passenger seat, threw open his door, knocking Ellis down, they said.

The witnesses — one of whom yelled for the officers to stop attacking Ellis — and a doorbell surveillance camera captured video of parts of the encounter. The video showed Ellis with his hands up in a surrender position as Burbank shot a Taser at his chest and Collins wrapped an arm around his neck from behind.

Among the many other officers who responded was Rankine, who arrived after Ellis was already handcuffed face-down and knelt on his upper back.

Video captured Ellis addressing the officers as "sir" while telling them he couldn't breathe. One officer is heard responding, "Shut the (expletive) up, man."

"When I saw Manuel not doing anything, and him get attacked like that, it wasn't right," witness Sara McDowell, 26, said at the trial. "I'd never seen police do anything like that. It was the worst thing I've ever seen. It was scary. It wasn't OK."

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