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Decision postponed for health officer's removal

Testimony, discussion stretches past four hours

By HOLLY GASKILL
After a grueling 4.5-hour hearing, the Wells County Health Board took the matter of Health Officer Dr. Kay Johnson's removal under advisement. The board unanimously agreed to initiate the process for removal on Dec. 6 and met Wednesday at 5 p.m. for a hearing. The bulk of the hearing was spent with evidence,

interviews and cross-examination between County Attorney Ted Storer and Health Officer Dr. Kay Johnson's legal counsel, Martha Lemert of Burt Blee law firm in Fort Wayne. Ben Bilimek of Beers Mallers law firm in Fort Wayne served as the hearing officer. Roughly 40 people were in attendance, eight of whom spoke during public comment, which followed four hours of presentation.

Referencing Indiana Code 16-20-1-28, Storer outlined the board's reasons for removal as Johnson's alleged failure to perform statutory duties, specifically regarding department vacancies, and other just cause.

Health Board President Chris Esterling testified first, stating his belief Johnson had failed to maintain meeting minutes, appoint personnel, and hire and train personnel for the Health Department. Lemert and Johnson later denied each of these points.

The crux of the conversation continually returned to the employee turnover within the department, which both parties agreed followed Marlene Hoag's retirement as deputy administrator in November 2022.



Wells County Health Officer Dr. Kay Johnson, pictured right, speaks to the Health Board during the hearing for her removal Wednesday night. Next to Johnson is her attorney, Martha Lemert, and behind is County Attorney Ted Storer. (Photos by Holly Gaskill)



John Stauffer addresses the Wells County Health Board during the hearing's time for public comments.

Hoag testified she had trained her replacement, Tricia Ross, for 10-12 weeks before her retirement and extended her help for the future. Ross reportedly texted Hoag twice in the following months; meanwhile, the department fell behind on regular paperwork.

Former septic environmental specialist Ryan Bennett reportedly resigned in late April 2023, and Ross' resignation followed shortly

after. In June 2023, the department was effectively left with half of its previous full-time staff.

In a special health board meeting in June, the board approved Hoag returning to her previous position to assist in the transition. She returned on July 5, 2023.

Due to the need to prepare an annual budget, catch up on paperwork and discuss the positions' job descriptions, the open positions were not posted immediately, and

there was a significant delay in receiving applicants.

The department later had turnover in another part-time role and the food environmental specialist position.

Esterling alleged that Johnson had been absent in this process, which was later echoed by board member Steven Bales. Esterling said the situation required the County Commissioners' intervention.

(Continued on Page 2)

Man arrested after attempting to flee from police

By SYDNEY KENT
A man from Ossian has been taken into custody after he allegedly attempted to flee from police early Tuesday morning.

Cody Howe, 24, was charged with domestic battery in the presence of a child less than 16-years-old and resisting law enforcement.

According to Ossian Chief of Police Kurt Jack, the Ossian Police Department responded to a report of a domestic altercation in the 200 block of Countryside Drive at approximately 7:49 a.m. When officers arrived, Howe immediately attempted to run away and resist arrest. He was apprehended shortly after his failed attempt to flee.

Howe's bond has been set at \$26,000. Jack advised that additional details are limited at this time as this is an ongoing investigation.



Cody Howe

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House Republicans to push retiree 13th check and antisemitism bills

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑOZ
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Indiana's House Republican caucus — 70 strong — will prioritize legislation boosting retirement benefits for public employees and banning antisemitism in public educational institutions, alongside bills on job training and administrative law.

Democrats, meanwhile, focused on accountability. Conversations humming in the House Chamber on Monday quieted as Speaker Todd Huston stepped up to a lectern and gavelled the chamber's 100 lawmakers into the de facto first day of session.

Huston said the caucus would again aim to give public retirees a benefit increase known as a 13th check, after the Senate skipped out on one last session — angering many.

"It's been an important thing to our caucus and we wanted to pass it again this year," Huston told reporters.

The check supplements benefits that generally don't keep up with inflation. Lawmakers have traditionally offered former employees either a 13th check or cost of living adjustments during two-year budget cycles.

The House last year unanimously approved legisla-

tion obligating \$37.8 million one year followed by \$38.2 million the next to supplement retiree pay but it never got a hearing in the Senate.

Dedicated funding in a separate account already exists to cover the cost.

An interim study committee recommended that Indiana should move from ad hoc benefit increases to a long-term approach guaranteeing annual 13th checks for some and COLAs for others.

Huston said House Republicans would additionally champion legislation reaffirming the rights of Jewish students to receive an education free of religious discrimination.

Indiana law already bans discrimination on the basis of race and "creed," which means religion. House Bill 1002 would specify that antisemitism — bias against Jewish people — is religious discrimination and is not allowed within the public education system.

The legislation uses a definition of antisemitism adopted by the U.S. State Department, U.S. Education Department and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. And it makes clear that "criticism of

(Continued on Page 2)

Snow in West, flooding in Northeast, more foul weather on way

By KATHY McCORMACK and SCOTT McFETRIDGE
Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Drenching rains, flooding and fierce winds stranded vehicles, shuttered schools and knocked out power to hundreds of thousands in the Northeast, the swan song of a bout of violent weather that battered most of the United States. Forecasters warned Wednesday that more misery was not far behind.

The storm hit the Northeast

on Tuesday night and moved out Wednesday after toppling trees, downing power lines, and forcing water rescues on flooded or washed-out roads.

Wind gusts reached as high as 95 mph in Maine, and blustery weather continued Wednesday. Philadelphia, which sits on the Delaware River upstream from the Atlantic Ocean, experienced its highest storm surge on record.

Another storm could bring heavy rain and high winds to the Northeast from Friday night into

Saturday, forecasters said.

The region's woes followed a day of tornadoes and deadly accidents in the South and blizzards in the Midwest and Northwest. In some parts of the Pacific Northwest and the Rockies, more than 2 feet of snow fell. Bone-chilling cold promised to follow in some areas, and an avalanche in California killed at least one person as a new storm rolled in.

Hundreds of thousands of customers lost power at some point as storms swept the country. At

least 250,000 customers remained without power Wednesday afternoon on both coasts and in parts of the Midwest, with New York and Pennsylvania leading the count, according to PowerOutage.us.

Nearly 700 flights were canceled across the country Wednesday, according to FlightAware.com.

The effects of the storm by region, and what's still to come:

NEW YORK, NEW JERSEY, PENNSYLVANIA
A couple of Pennsylvania com-

munities got more than 4 inches of rain, and others came close. Emergency responders rescued some drivers as low-lying roads flooded.

In Lower Macungie, outside Allentown, a Mercedes remained in the middle of a now-dry two-lane road Wednesday afternoon, its owner having yet to retrieve it. An orange cone, a sign that rescuers had cleared the car, sat atop it. All told, first responders rescued four motorists in the bedroom community.

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Outside

Father Winter continues playing peek-a-boo

Today	Friday	Saturday
High 36	High 43	High 26
Low 28	Low 24	Low 7

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Online

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Health Department

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 tion. Esterling concluded, "The reason there are many people trying to assist and intervene is not because they want to take charge or be in a position of authority, but it appears to be due to no one taking charge and problems are trying to be solved because of the Health Officer's lack of leadership."

Having served on the board for over 20 years, Bales said this was not the first time the board had been frustrated with a lack of action on Johnson's part, and claimed he had discussed her removal with Hoag during the issues with COVID-19. "We need to move on with someone who wants to lead," Bales stated.

Storer asserted Johnson had failed to give direction about job postings and had not done due diligence in advertising the positions.

Citing IC 16-20-1-9, Lemert said the deputy administrator was delegated the responsibility of job advertisement in the role's job description, and the topic was not an appropriate criticism of Johnson's leadership. Even so, Lemert referenced several meeting minutes and News-Banner articles where Johnson had reportedly provided guidance on staffing issues. Hoag additionally testified that Johnson had "always been available."

In her testimony, Johnson alleged elected officials had instigated staffing issues. She stated Bennett had primarily resigned due to an interpersonal issue with a coworker, and specifically regarding a disputed inspection. Johnson claimed "Mr. Hanover" had later come into the department and threatened Ross' job, and she submitted her resignation the following day.

Commissioner Mike Vanover later denied this claim. County Council member Brandon Harnish, also present during Wednesday's hearing, had previously confirmed he had a conversation with Ross prior to her resignation.

In the Aug. 19, 2023, edition of The News-Banner, Harnish gave the following statement: "As far as I'm concerned, an elected official had an interview with an employee of the Health Department about the potential wrongdoing of a subordinate. The next day, that employee quit."

Johnson also took issue with how officials had publicly criticized the department, allegedly without speaking with her first. Several times a Facebook post from Vanover was referenced, where he called the actions of some individuals at the Health Department "corrupt and reprehensible." Johnson advised that public criticism like this had made it difficult for the department to attract prospective employees.

"Whatever issues we have are not because of me, and certainly not because of bad leadership, it's because of people interfering," Johnson stated.

"I stand by the comments I made on Facebook," Vanover said. "They were directed toward a specific employee that engaged in behavior and that is my opinion of what it represents, not the entire department. There are good, hardworking people that do a good job, and I absolutely believe that."

Johnson additionally insisted she was kept out of the loop on issues and updates with the department. Johnson has held the position since 2010 and claimed the position had always been understood as a largely advisory role. Several times Johnson said it was not communicated that the board or officials had wanted her to be more involved or complete certain tasks.

Board members Dr. Mary Donley and Dr. Bartholomew Hott took issue with this assertion. "When you know someone so crucial is leaving a department, why didn't you take steps to make sure things are OK?" Hott asked. Donley later asked, "You are not a neophyte (novice) ... how could you see problems that were developing and not become a more active participant?"

Johnson responded that it had not been a previous expectation for her to intervene in personnel matters. Storer asked if there had been a similar previous situation, and Johnson replied that there had not.



Above, Health Board member Steven Bales (left) asks Health Officer Dr. Kay Johnson follow-up questions to her testimony. Board President Chris Esterling sits at right.

At left, Johnson's attorney, Martha Lemert, presents a document for review. Johnson sits at right. (Photos by Holly Gaskill)

Regarding Johnson's alleged failure to train personnel, Johnson claimed Hoag had presented Ross as trained and capable for the position. Bales later disputed this, saying Hoag had told him there had been issues toward the end of Ross' training, just before Hoag's retirement.

Johnson argued she was never notified of this, and other issues were allegedly only discovered after Ross had left the department.

Concerning missing meeting minutes, both parties agreed that meeting minutes were not recorded at the June 15, 2023, board meeting. Storer said this had been the deputy administrator's responsibility at the time, but given Ross' resignation reportedly the following day, it was Johnson's responsibility to ensure this was completed.

Lemert again denied it was the health officer's responsibility. Johnson later expressed that it was weak criticism to focus on one meeting's minutes in 14 years as a health officer.

This sentiment was echoed by Michael Lautzenheiser Sr., 1718 William Wells Circle in Bluffton, during the meeting's public comments. Lautzenheiser contended that the Wells health officer has never been expected to fulfill such duties, and previous officers have not been judged so harshly. "We have a chance tonight to heal this community, not divide it," Lautzenheiser said.

John Stauffer, 123 West Walnut St. in Bluffton, asked where criticism has been for the board, who appointed Johnson to a four-year term in 2022 and apparently haven't communicated with Johnson or stepped in past their advisory roles.

Additionally, Stauffer questioned why the board had jumped toward removal when there had been no written documentation of where she had failed expectations. "It seems really questionable whether or not appropriate steps have been followed," Stauffer said.

"As I listened to a lot of this, common decency, common sense and employment practices would tell you, if you have an issue with somebody's performance, that you discuss it with them, that you have conversations, that you set expectations and timelines, right?" reiterated Tamra Boucher, 165 Conifer Ct. in Markle.

Storer and Esterling also mentioned Johnson's failure to produce a plan for the potential use of additional funding available through Health First Indiana. Johnson advised she and Public Health Nurse Lynn Blevins had discussed several wanted items, but Blevins said it

was communicated early on that the county did not intend to join the program.

Jennifer Brink, 910 River Rd. in Bluffton, took significant issue with this and criticized the board's lack of education about the program.

However, Roger Thornton, 1335 Hollendale Dr. in Bluffton, said it was "ill-advised" and "inappropriate" to discuss Health First Indiana at the hearing. He added, "I believe that counsel for Dr. Johnson, and Dr. Johnson as well, have proven that she is not involved, takes no responsibility for any of the issues that now face your department ... She doesn't take responsibility for orienting this board, for developing job descriptions and for being active in the department leadership. I appreciate your work as a board — it has to be a thankless job, particularly tonight."

Don Smith, 1426 Deerbrook Ct. in Bluffton, suggested much of the harsh criticism of the department ultimately began with COVID-19. "I don't think anybody would want to come to Wells County and work with all this," Smith said. "We got a real problem — let's get rid of another person, and I guarantee you there will never be anybody who wants to come to this county and work in the Health Department."

However, Walter Erxleben, 1157 North Shore Dr. in Bluffton, said he had been disappointed Johnson had not taken a stronger leadership role to defend the Health Department with COVID-19 issues.

During her comments, Johnson expressed her belief that she has been more heavily criticized as a Black woman in the role. She stated every health officer before had been a white male, and she had been passed over the first time she applied to the position despite her credentials, which include a master's in public health from Yale Medical School.

"There have been people that I know have been uncomfortable with the face of a Black woman representing this department in Wells County," she said. "And although I have not endured any racial slurs, it's been obvious to me that some people are uncomfortable with that."

Given the time and that board member Hott had to leave before the hearing's end, Storer suggested the board take the matter under advisement. All board members were present Wednesday.

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for 6:30 a.m. Feb. 16. A special meeting has not been scheduled at the time of print.

Weather

Thursday, January 11, 2024

(24-hour observations at 9:18 p.m. Wednesday)
High: 35; **Low:** 32; **Precipitation:** 0.03 inches of rain
Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 4.98 feet at 9:45 p.m. Wednesday

Wells County forecast

Today: Mostly cloudy, with a high near 36. West wind 15 to 20 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph.

Thursday Night: A slight chance of snow after 1 a.m., mixing with rain after 4 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 28. West wind 5 to 15 mph becoming east after midnight. Winds could gust as high as 20 mph. Chance of precipitation is 20 percent.

Friday: Rain, mainly after 7 a.m. Patchy blowing snow after 4 p.m. High near 43. East wind around 20 mph, with gusts as high as 35 mph. Chance of precipitation is 100 percent. New precipitation amounts between 1 and 2 inches possible.

Friday Night: Rain before 10 p.m., then snow, possibly mixed with rain between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m., then snow likely after 1 a.m. Patchy blowing snow. Low around 24. Windy, with a southeast wind 25 to 30 mph becoming west 30 to 35 mph in the evening. Winds could gust as high as 50 mph. Chance of precipitation is 90 percent. New snow accumulation of less than one inch possible.

Saturday: A 50 percent chance of snow. Patchy blowing snow. Cloudy, with a high near 26. Windy.

Saturday Night: A 20 percent chance of snow showers before 1 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 7. Breezy.

Sunday: A 30 percent chance of snow showers, mainly after 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy and cold, with a high near 15.

Sunday Night: A 30 percent chance of snow showers, mainly before 1 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around -1.

M.L.King Day: Mostly cloudy and cold, with a high near 9.

Monday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around -5.

Tuesday: Partly sunny and cold, with a high near 10.

Tuesday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 3.

House Republicans

(Continued from Page 1)
 Israel similar to that leveled against any other country" is not antisemitism.

Huston on Monday confirmed that support of Palestine — not the terrorist group Hamas — would not be considered antisemitism under the legislation.

The House unanimously approved an identically-worded bill last session, but it didn't make it out of committee in the Senate and died.

"We'll give it another shot to pass that again this year," Huston said.

Democrats introduce priorities

Minority Leader Phil GiaQuinta agreed that lawmakers should send retirees a 13th check "instead of breaking this promise to them like we did last year."

House Democrats laid out a pricer list of priorities: universal pre-kindergarten in hopes of boosting Indiana's worsening reading proficiency rates, increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates, and offering more property tax relief to homeowners and renters.

GiaQuinta also said he wanted to "moderate" the controversial Indiana Economic Development Corp., a quasi-public agency.

He criticized the entity for not establishing "community trust" while embarking on a massive, water-intensive industrial development known as LEAP.

"Understandably, many Tippecanoe County residents feel that the IEDC has little concern for their long-term water supply, and views their concerns as secondary to getting the LEAP project over the finish line," GiaQuinta said. "Likewise, Terre Haute and other downstream communities have expressed concern about the project. These decisions only amplify citizen distrust in their government."

"IEDC needs more transparency and oversight. The legislature has written IEDC

far too many blank checks over the past few years. As my colleagues from Tippecanoe County have noted, we need to look before we leap," GiaQuinta quipped, prompting quiet laughter from the chamber.

House Democrats additionally pushed for the state to adopt citizen-led ballot initiatives, which residents in states like Michigan, Ohio and Kansas have recently used to require independent redistricting, protect abortion access or authorize marijuana use.

"Voters ... have weighed in loud and clear: Midwesterners don't like the government telling them what to do," GiaQuinta said. "I don't know about you, but I have a strong suspicion that Hoosiers don't like the government telling them what to do on abortion or marijuana either."

The constitutional change would require multiple years of legislative approval plus a voter referendum.

Huston indicated that the idea is a non-starter: "We have elections every two years where people have a chance to vote and I think the way it works today has been successful for Indiana."

Quiet day in the Senate

Across the hall, Chief Justice Loretta Rush swore in the Senate's newest member: Dave Vinzant, a former Hobart councilman. He succeeds former Sen. Eddie Melton, who won the mayoral election in Gary.

Vinzant joins three other new senators: Indianapolis' Cyndi Carrasco, Guilford's Randy Maxwell and Terre Haute's Greg Goode. Sen. Pro Tem Rodric Bray, R-Martinsville, welcomed the assembled senators for their first day — noting that the chamber already had a committee scheduled to meet Monday and were moving quickly.

"I'm grateful to be back and ready to get to work," he said.

More foul weather

(Continued from Page 1)
 "It's a common occurrence that when we have the heavy rains and the flooding occurs, and we shut down these roads, that some people choose to take their chances," said Lower Macungie Fire Chief David Nosal. "And some make it through, some don't, and those that don't end up calling 911, and then we have to go out and retrieve them."

The storm surge at Philadelphia was the highest in records dating to 1900, said Jeff Masters, a meteorologist with Yale Climate Connections. The storm flooded roads, uprooted trees and cut power.

The previous high surge came during Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

"Coastal flooding is accelerating and will continue to do so because sea level

rise is accelerating, as well," Masters said.

In New Jersey, roads flooded and rivers rose after some up to 3 inches of rain fell on ground already saturated by another storm a few weeks ago.

Lou DeFazio, 65, of Manville, lives steps from the Millstone River, which flooded disastrously in 2021 in the remnants of Hurricane Ida.

"It's getting worse and worse," he said as the river swelled Wednesday.

In New York's Nassau County, on Long Island, cars slogged through water in the streets of Freeport. Farther east, near the Hamptons, flooding was reported at Shinnecock Bay. Several schools across Long Island canceled or delayed classes.

New York City officials evacuated nearly 2,000

migrants housed at a sprawling tent complex in Brooklyn amid fears high winds could collapse it. Families slept on the floor of a high school. The migrants returned to the complex early Wednesday after winds eased.

NEW ENGLAND AND CANADA

Winds gusted to 95 mph at Maine's Isle au Haut, an

island in Penobscot Bay, said Jon Palmer, of the National Weather Service.

Winds pushed a parked but empty Southwest Airlines plane into a jet bridge early Wednesday at Portland International Jetport, Maine's largest airport, officials said. No one was hurt, but a wing was damaged and a new aircraft was sent to operate the flight.

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Police Notebook

INCIDENTS

County:
 Tuesday, 4:54 p.m., Ind. 116 and North Meridian Road, Bluffton. Caller reported two vehicle accident. Ind. 116 closed down temporarily.

Tuesday, 5:32 p.m., Jeff Road and West 900 South, Warren. Officer assisted with crash involving one vehicle upside down with one person trapped. Officer noted open containers of alcohol and the odor of alcohol on driver's breath. William Roberts arrested for operating while intoxicated, endangering another person, a Class A misdemeanor.

Tuesday, 5:50 p.m., North Meridian Road and Ind. 124, Bluffton. Caller reported water in roadway. Officer noted it wasn't noteworthy.

Wednesday, 10:38 a.m., 200 South and South 300 West, Liberty Center. Caller reported workers parking on roadway are making things difficult. Officer noted there was plenty of room for vehicles to get by.

ACCIDENTS

County:
 Tuesday, 4:54 p.m., Ind 116 and Meridian Road. A witness reported that a Silver Chevy Equinox, driven by David Lahwhorn, was driving left of center on Ind. 116 for approximately half a mile before striking a Ford Flex driven by Melissa Fisher and continuing off of the roadway into a ditch. Both vehicles were towed due to disabling damage. Damages did not exceed \$25,000.

ARRESTS

Cody Andrew Howe, 24, Ossian, domestic battery in the presence of a child less than 16, a Level 6 felony, and resisting law enforcement, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$26,000.

Austin Glen Kolkman, 22, Fort Wayne, battery committed with a deadly weapon, a Level 5 felony, and criminal recklessness with a deadly weapon, a Level 6 felony. No bond set.

William D Roberts, 39, Warren, operating a vehicle while intoxicated — endangerment, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,500.

Zachary Ryan Porter, 22, Ossian, leaving the scene of a crash, a Class B misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,000.

Indiana teacher salaries are on the rise — but averages still fall short of governor's goal

New report shows pay increases for many Hoosier educators in 2022-23, though averages stayed below \$60,000 goal

By CASEY SMITH
Indiana Capital Chronicle
 New data shows Indiana's teacher pay is ticking up — but still trails behind averages in neighboring states — as the debate over Hoosier educator salaries continues.

The average teacher salary in Indiana is \$58,531 — up from about \$57,000 the year prior — according to the 2022-23 state teacher compensation report by the Indiana Education Employment Relations Board.

The lowest teacher salary reported was \$38,000. The highest is about \$108,000.

More than 31,000 full-time Hoosier teachers earn above the statewide average. Almost 32,000 educators still earn below that margin, per the report.

Currently, Indiana law requires a minimum salary of \$40,000 for each full-time teacher. The Indiana State Teachers Association's county-by-county map of average teacher salaries and starting salaries shows most, but not all, Hoosier districts have raised salary minimums during the previous and current school years.

But representatives from the state's largest teacher union told the Indiana Capital Chronicle that the latest IEERB report shows "there is still work to be done in achieving the teacher salary goals set by the governor in 2020."

"It's evident that other states continue to outpace Indiana in making investments in K-12 education, placing Indiana at a disadvantage," said ISTA President Keith Gambill, who emphasized in November that the union is additionally continuing to lobby for professional pay benefits and support for parent educators, bus drivers, food service workers and other "vital support staff."

He said salary concerns are further "amplified" by "weak" school funding in the recent state budget's second year, "which jeopardizes the progress made in the previous budget cycle." In response, part of ISTA's 2024 legislative agenda calls for a \$500 million increase to basic tuition support for traditional public schools in the 2025 fiscal year

"ISTA remains committed to attracting and retaining the best educators by being competitive on teacher pay," Gambill continued. "We will continue to advocate for prioritizing public school funding to ensure what's best for our students."

Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb — whose 2024 agenda is expected to be released Monday — said previously that he intends to make teacher pay competitive with surrounding states and get Indiana's average teacher salary up to \$60,000. The same increase was recommended by the governor's 2020 Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission.

Legislation mandating such pay has yet to pass. Instead, Holcomb has said he trusts districts to manage their own budgets and find ways to increase teacher salaries locally.

Republican legislative leaders have repeatedly said they do not intend to re-open the Indiana budget during the 2024 short session — meaning any bills requiring new state funds before the next budget cycle are unlikely to advance.

Even so, a new bill filed

by Rep. Sheila Klinker, D-Lafayette, seeks to increase teacher minimum salaries to \$60,000.

House Bill 1037 would require school corporations that cannot meet the requirement to submit a report to the Indiana Department of Education explaining why they cannot meet the pay threshold.

"Teachers need to know that they're valued and appreciated. It's essential that teacher pay reflects the hard work and dedication of our educators. We're experiencing a nationwide teacher shortage, so we need to encourage people to come into our profession," said Klinker, a retired teacher. "Raising the minimum salary to a competitive pay is the start of recruiting new educators. ... We must encourage people to join — and stay — in our profession."

The latest salary data
 The IEERB has issued its Collective Bargaining Report each year since 2013. All Hoosier school corporations and employers that bargain with an exclusive representative organization are required to complete the survey.

Of the 305 entities that submitted data for the latest analysis, 289 were traditional public schools, 10 were special education cooperatives, and six were career centers.

Total salary costs for all teachers across Indiana totaled more than \$3.6 billion. At least 291 school corporations use federal grants and 31 use property tax referendums to support teacher salaries.

Indiana law additionally tasks the IEERB with collecting teacher salary averages from surrounding states, including Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio and Kentucky. Data from Illinois, Michigan and Kentucky were not yet available and left out of the report, however.

Although Wisconsin and Ohio reported teacher salary minimums at \$35,000 — \$3,000 lower than Indiana — educators in both states average higher annual pay than their Hoosier counterparts.

Salary statistics for Wisconsin indicate an average teacher salary of \$61,858. In Ohio, the average is \$71,495.

Indiana's district-level

administrators also average lower annual salaries than in neighboring states.

Administrators in Indiana average \$113,746 per year, according to the IEERB report, while those in Wisconsin average \$153,111, and \$130,372 in Ohio.

Even when adjusted for cost of living, salaries for Indiana's teachers are below that of educators in Wisconsin and Ohio.

Indiana superintendents, meanwhile, averaged \$136,961 in 2022-23. Superintendent salary comparisons for other states were not included in the report.

Indiana's average teacher salary is ranked 39th in the United States by the National Education Association. The state's average teacher starting salary is ranked 29th.

More educators in the pipeline

Though K-12 enrollment in Hoosier school decreased by 2,605 students in 2022-23, the Indiana teacher workforce grew by more than 200 educators, according to the report.

The total number of full-time teachers in the state increased to 62,882 — up from 62,673 in 2021-22, and 62,393 in 2019-20.

The number of teacher candidates enrolled in Indiana colleges and universities that offer teacher credentialing programs increased to 11,824 in 2021-22, latest school year data available. That's an increase from 10,972 would-be educators in 2018-2019.

More than 3,600 first-year, full-time educators were hired during the 2022-23 school year. Another 1,415 teachers retired.

Fewer teachers are being retained, however. According to the IEERB survey data, 55,227 teachers were retained in 2022-23 from the previous year. That's compared to 55,682 the year before, and 56,999 in 2020-21.

The number of district-level administrators also dropped to 806 in the 2022-23 school year, 138 fewer than the year prior.

Multiple initiatives spearheaded by Indiana lawmakers and state education officials are currently underway to boost teacher numbers. That includes scholarships and multiple other incentive programs meant to recruit and retain students in education preparation programs.

Indiana House panel advances bill criminalizing AI nudity

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ
Indiana Capital Chronicle

The House Courts and Criminal Codes committee unanimously voted Wednesday to move a bill adding computer-generated nude pictures of real people to Indiana's revenge pornography statute — despite reservations over the legislation's wording.

Technological advancements have made the computer creation of synthetic nudes simpler than ever, said Courtney Curtis, with the Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council.

In a deepfake, a person's face can be pasted onto another's body, making it appear as though the person said or did things that they did not. That technology emerged in 2020.

And it's progressed since then. Now, websites and apps can take real photographs or videos and digitally remove the subject's clothing.

"What is kind of insidious about this is that these images can be taken off of an individual's social media," Curtis said. "... Anyone can be a victim."

Middle and high school students in New Jersey, Washington and Wisconsin have been targeted by the fake imagery, according to news reports.

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation even warned in June that "malicious actors" are harassing or blackmailing children and non-consenting adults with synthetic nudes.

Indiana's revenge pornography statute, however, only criminalizes intimate images and videos that are non-consensually distributed by the people who snapped the pic-

tures or shot the clips.

"We're just not currently covering it," Curtis said.

But House Bill 1047 could run afoul of the First Amendment, the Indiana Public Defender Commission cautioned.

Staff attorney Joel Wieneke said the legislation's language is too broad and could pull in cartoonish representations of people or lead to prosecution of people who see the imagery but weren't involved in its creation.

He suggested the lawmakers tweak the text to require that the synthetic nudes actually resemble real people in order to be a crime and edit language criminalizing dissemination without creation.

The law would retain its 2019 consequences: a Class A misdemeanor unless the perpetrator is a repeat offender. Then, it's a Level 6 felony.

Committee members voted 10-0 to advance the bill, with author Rep. Sharon Negele, R-Attica, vowing to continue working on the phrasing.

The bill advanced with an amendment temporarily waiving the state's statute of limitations to ensure Boy Scouts settlement claimants to receive the full amount they're owed. The House passed that proposal last year but the Senate killed it.

Negele said it was the legislature's last chance to make the change for the 760 Hoosier abuse survivors, as the Boy Scouts of America bankruptcy settlement's window for changes closes in April — before next session.

The legislation will next be heard on the House floor.

Chief Justice hails local courts in State of the Judiciary speech

By NIKI KELLY
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Loretta Rush used her annual State of the Judiciary address Wednesday to thank lawmakers for past financial support and illustrate how courts are helping Hoosiers every day.

"This year, we are eager to show you the return on your investment — the proverbial 'bang for the buck' — your funding has produced. We are incredibly grateful for your trusted financial commitment to the judiciary," Rush said in her 10th address to the House and Senate. "Your investment has paid huge dividends, enhancing operational efficiencies in the courts and improving the lives of the Hoosiers we all serve."

She offered several examples, with emphasis on Indiana's 21 family recovery courts.

She told the story of a

Vigo County man — identified as Josh — whose children were removed from his custody while he was struggling with addiction. Through the recovery court process, he went to Narcotics Anonymous and anger management meetings. He also worked with a volunteer teacher weekly until he earned his GED. Now he has his driver's license, is married to a supportive wife and has been reunited with his children.

"Josh's transformation was possible thanks to the funding you provided for problem-solving courts — what a return on investment," Rush said.

She also talked about a recent rural justice summit aimed at developing solutions for accessing treatment and promoting rehabilitation in under-resourced areas.

"Courts are a primary referral source to get people to treatment. But there are

huge barriers when a county has no service providers, no problem-solving courts, or not enough attorneys," Rush said. "And no one sees a return on investment when we have 'justice by geography,' where a person can get help in one county but can get locked up in another because the same resources are not present."

The chief justice further touched on technology improvements and commercial courts before thanking Gov. Eric Holcomb for his leadership and appointment of 100 trial court judges.

"One of your legacies among many is that of a strong judiciary," Rush told the governor. "So be confident that your Judiciary will continue to be strong. We will continue to respect the wise investment that you've done by giving us the funding you have the past year and may God continue to bless our great state."

Rep. Cherrish Pryor: Bans bias in home appraisals

House Bill 1195, by Indianapolis Rep. Robin Shackelford: Creates the right to counsel eviction task force to help those in eviction proceedings receive appropriate representation.

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IBLC targets fair housing in 2024 agenda

By CASEY SMITH
Indiana Capital Chronicle

"The ability to have a house to call your own is an integral part of the American Dream," East Chicago Rep. Earl Harris, the IBLC's chair, said in a statement. "Homeownership is a stepping stone that allows an individual and their families to plant their roots and build their lives. Owning a home is about far more than having a roof over your head; it's about giving Hoosiers a sense of security and the ability to save up for upcoming milestones, like sending their kid to college or heading into retirement. This bill will help cut more everyday Hoosiers in on the American Dream and will

strengthen the middle class along the way."

House Bill 1176, authored by Harris, would establish a program to assist home buyers with down payments while House Bill 1128, authored by Indianapolis Rep. Vanessa Summers, would prohibit foreclosures due to medical debt.

Additional bills include: Senate Bill 243, from Indianapolis Sen. Andrea Hunley: Requires landlords to deliver written notice of intent to sell their property and requires the buyer of a rental property to honor the written lease between the previous owner and their tenants

House Bill 1112, authored by Indianapolis

After Modernity, what?

The history of western civilization is generally divided into three epochs, if memory serves from my junior high world history class. This classification scheme was retroactively applied by historians trying to make sense of why things changed so dramatically at certain points in time.

The first epoch, antiquity, covered the thousands of years between the first historical record and the "official" fall of the western Roman Empire just prior to A.D. 500. The current epoch is called modernity, beginning with the Renaissance and Reformation around 1500 or a little earlier. Everything in between got the non-original name of the Middle Ages.

The important thing about this taxonomy is not the dating which is hardly as precise as we like to think. Rather, it is the fundamental changes that occurred to the whole of civilization in the west. If one compares lives about 100 years before the divide to that of 100 years after, it is clear that something big had happened, although probably not noticed by those who lived through the transition.

I find the medieval period the most fascinating of the three so when the historian Dan Jones came out with a survey history of the entire Middle Ages, I had to read it. "Powers and Thrones: A New History of the Middle Ages" is long; after all, it has a thousand years to cover, but it is well written and hard to put down.

Jones's thesis is that several events or developments occurred throughout the Middle Ages to prepare mankind for modernity. It is the confluence or accumulation of these developments which set a point of no return, a point of no going back to the way things were.

Jones ends with a question he deliberately does not answer: Are we today living through existential and fundamental changes similar to that experienced by our late medieval ancestors?

Consider each of Jones's developments that brought in modernity and ushered out medieval life.

First is the invention of the printing press. No one would have heard of Martin Luther if it hadn't been for Gutenberg. We live in a communication revolution every bit as structural with the internet, email, social media and 24-hour cable news. Check box 1 with a big X.

Next, the discovery of America reoriented Europe away from the East and toward the West. We now live in a global community but are looking outward toward space travel and other planets. This may be restricted to astronauts and billionaire dilettantes right now, but only 90 men sailed with Columbus. Check box 2 but with a lighter X.

Jones's third development was the fracture of the church due to the Reformation and the concomitant weakened political power of the papacy. Today that fracture is nearly complete as church attendance in the West is at an all-time low. A study of the world's nations shows nine of the bottom ten are in Europe, with only Communist Cuba breaking into that list. Check box 3.

Fourth, demographic changes across Europe were the result of the Black Death and other pandemics. Europe's feudal agricultural economy was shattered with political power shifting across class lines. Covid certainly wasn't a medieval style plague but it has contributed to a fundamental change in our employment and educational power structures. Check box 4 but lightly.

Finally, Jones points to humanism as a new philosophical standard, upsetting medieval scholasticism and other traditional thought systems universally accepted by most everyone. Today we have a progressive attack on western values with Nietzschean nihilism as the orthodox philosophy. Our emphasis is totally on the individual, not larger affinity groups (identity politics as the exception which proves the rule.) Check box 5 with an extra-large X.

That is my synthesis of Jones's thesis. I didn't need an antithesis to move my dialectic to the end point.

Jones, however, adds two more developments to his list of 21st century tipping points: mass migrations of displaced people and climate change. The so-called barbarian invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries get much of the blame for that first epochal shift although not such much in the second. But it is worth noting that the Little Ice Age began in the late Middle Ages, a multi-century change in climate that left recurrent hunger due to colder and wetter growing seasons.

So are we living through the end of modernity as a historical epoch? We can't possibly know that from inside history. One hundred years from now our progeny, standing outside our history, can better answer that question.

The more important question is whether the new epoch will be an improvement on the current one. Advances in medicine, agricultural production and travel safety can't be gainsaid. The same doesn't hold for me at least in morality, philosophy and theology. Families and communities were anchored in a feeling of belonging, something we have lost . . . or voluntarily surrendered.

Maybe I pushed Jones's conclusion way beyond where he wanted it to go. Even if not, I fervently hope my analysis is wrong.

Michael Anton, a research fellow at Hillsdale College, once wrote these changes that "new gods might do the trick but their introduction would seem to require a cataclysm." I regard the woke revolution to be of cataclysmic proportions. Its true believers certainly have new gods in mind.

I should take some comfort in the assumption that those who live during epochal transition don't notice it. The problem is that I more than notice it; I can't stop seeing it everywhere.

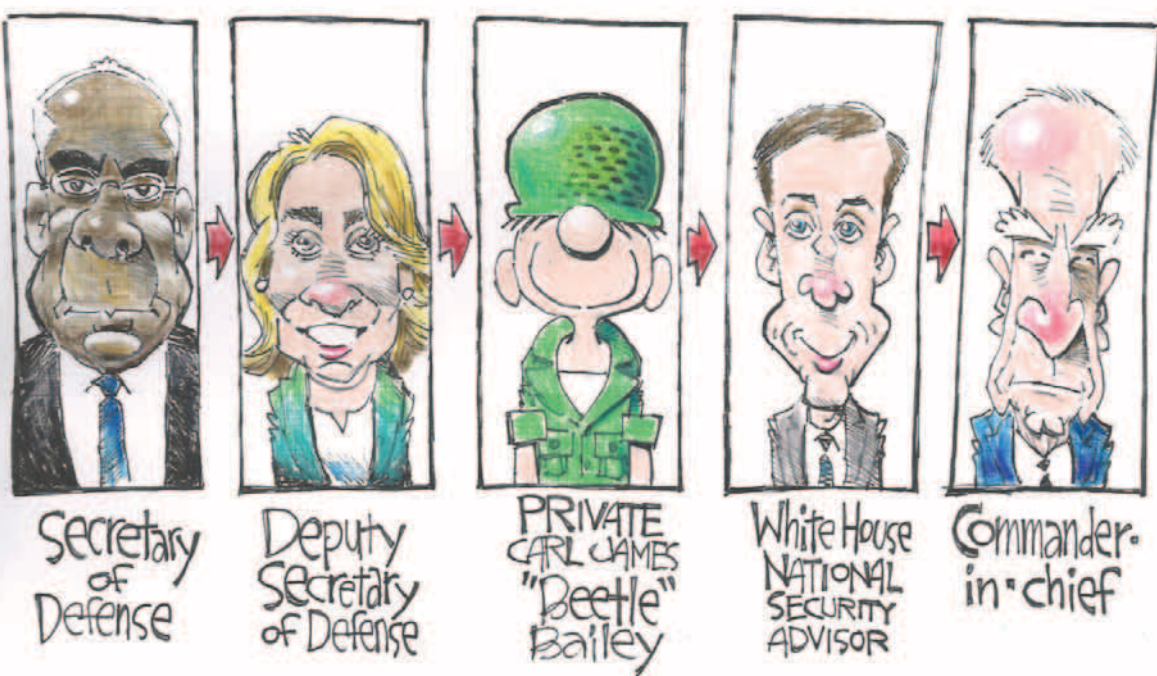
Mark Franke, an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review, is formerly an associate vice chancellor at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne.



Mark Franke

Hoosier Opinions

Pentagon to White House Chain of Command



The AWOL defense secretary

Anyone following how weak and passive the U.S. has been in the face of provocations from our adversaries in the Middle East might conclude that the secretary of defense has gone missing.

And, at least for a few days last week, he literally was.

In an age when it's nearly impossible to go off the grid, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin managed it. He failed to notify the White House and other key players that he was hospitalized in the intensive care unit. This, needless to say, is not an incidental detail about his life — like, say, that he routinely does his grocery shopping on Saturday afternoons, or is taking the Kansas City Chiefs and giving the points this weekend.

If the principal deputy assistant secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity went missing, presumably only her personal assistant would notice, and the country would be better for it.

The secretary of defense, in contrast, is a rather consequential position in the U.S. government. He is in charge of the largest and most important part of the executive branch and second in the chain of command only to the president of the United States. He is central to any number of scenarios crucial to U.S. national security, including the decision to launch a nuclear strike.

If a U.S. destroyer gets hit in the Red Sea, you don't want U.S. commanders and high U.S. officials wondering where the SecDef is.

Although much remains unanswered, we know that Austin had an elective procedure at Walter Reed hospital on Dec. 22. Back home, he experienced severe pain and went back to the hospital on Jan. 1 and was put in intensive care.

Somehow even Austin's deputy secretary, who picked up some of his duties, didn't learn of his whereabouts until four days after his hospitalization.

Loose lips may sink ships, but spectacularly dysfunctional lack of communication at the top of the U.S. government is its own problem.

Just as no Harvard freshman could get away with the plagiarism that Claudine Gay engaged in, no Pri-



Rich Lowry

vate first class could go AWOL and expect to remain in the military.

The Pentagon says it couldn't notify other VIPs like, you know, the president of the United States, because Austin's chief of staff was also ill. Are we really supposed to believe that no one else at the Pentagon has access to a phone or email?

We are obviously not living through an era of great bipartisanship, so it was notable that the Austin absence resulted in a joint statement from the Republican chairman and the Democratic ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee pointedly asking for more information about the days in ques-

tion. The White House, naturally, immediately made clear its "complete trust and confidence in Secretary Austin."

In fairness, once someone has presided over the pullout of Afghanistan without getting fired, it's hard to cashier him for anything short of losing some other county in humiliating fashion.

This fiasco could simply be Austin's own unbelievable personal lapse. But it's hard not to see the controversy in the context of an administration that, when it comes to national security, cares as much about fashionable ideological fixations — from DEI to the climate — than the essentials involved in maintaining a highly capable war-fighting machine.

And the most important lack of transparency about health is happening before our eyes. It doesn't involve any cabinet official, but the commander-in-chief himself. We are told that Joe Biden is robust and energetic, when he is increasingly rickety and, seemingly, easily confused. We can be sure if the president gets worse, the White House — adopting the Austin policy — will do everything in its power to hide the ball.

Meanwhile, we've conducted a real-time experiment regarding Biden foreign policy. With a war on in Gaza and Iranian proxies attacking U.S. interests throughout the Middle East, the secretary of defense disappeared, and it didn't matter.

Rich Lowry is on Twitter @RichLowry

Angelkeep ash, Deam ash, dead ash

Once upon a time Angelkeep had a pair of twin ash trees. Before Angelkeep even had been assigned a name, an excavated hole appeared that would one day be dubbed Angelpond.

Chaney Brothers were politely asked to try to save several trees marked about five foot off the ground with fluorescent hot pink duct tape. The marked pair of large ash trees were saved, although left very near the edge of the 15-foot deep hole.

About half their roots were necessarily cut away making the pond. After about five years both began to suffer. Their branches intermingled, so near to each other were their positions, and they appeared to cling to each other as the end came for both at the same time. The earliest autopsy results assumed death had occurred due to the loss of too many roots. Malnutrition and dehydration killed the twin ash.

More years passed and the ash pair dried out, the bark cracked, and pieces began to fall off. Abundant grooves appeared underneath in the trunk's wood changing the autopsy report to "death by Emerald Ash Borer."

It resembled a David and Goliath story. A wee small bug killed the giant twin ash. Perhaps it was more of a tortoise and hare story since the death took several years.

One hundred years prior to the Angelkeep's twin-ash murder story, ash trees hit page four of a Bluffton newspaper. Charles C. Deam arrived from his Indianapolis office to secure specimens for a scientific study of Indiana ash. Deam, a former Bluffton pharmacist, became a self-taught botanist so renowned that Hoosiers tagged him as the first Indiana State Forester. In that role, Deam, "plain ol' Charlie Deam," as he called himself, coordinated with Buck & Gutelius Handle Company of Bluffton to

Angelkeep Journals

obtain 50 blocks or discs of ash for scientific study. Deam shipped them to Purdue University.

Angelkeep's ash tree twins were not yet saplings when Deam sequestered ash samples. Angelkeep did have many large cottonwood trees that might have already been started back in June 1912 when the study's ash discs were cut. For sure Angelkeep's Osage orange trees were well established, having been planted as fence posts. They'd taken root at least half a century before Deam arrived. These Osage orange, or hedge apple trees, were cut off the Angelkeep perimeter by I & M Power. Ring counts proved some had taken root over a century and a half prior to their death in the 21st century.

Angelkeep's twin ash limbs broke and fell, little by little. The trunks rotted bit by bit. Soon the two were no longer holding hands (branches.) Each stood on their own against nature's attempt to topple them. In 2023, one fell half way, lodged against another ash a generation younger, it probably started by a seed of the very ash that fell. A woodsman and his chainsaw helped the ash to the ground. He cut a cord of fire wood. From there it would become ashes to ashes.

Bluffton's handle factory had no Wells County timber purchased and ready for cutting when Deam arrived so he accepted whatever could be cut in Adams, Jay, or Blackford counties. Deam's Purdue student assistants accompanied timber cutters with Deam personally superintending the



Alan Daugherty

cutting. Each tree providing a disc would be documented as to its location, soil type, and with the cuts taken at six feet off the ground, would have their rings counted for a record of their age. All of the data would assist the Purdue scientists, and Deam, in determining the best and most rapid growing conditions for ash. "Ash had been declared the most profitable tree to be planted for the market."

Angelkeep ash continue to grow from seeds. Once they get to a near mature stage, Emerald Ash Borers find them and do their dastardly deed. Angelkeep yet holds onto one original ash left at the north edge of Angelpond. Bark falls off the west side of the trunk. Insect bored grooves show in the trunk. Yet, half of the tree continues to fight on. Half continues to leaf each year. It's been fighting death two decades. In this case the hare is keeping one hop ahead of the tortoise.

Charlie Deam's education in botany began through E. B. Williamson when E. B. was age 19. They became buddies to the end, like Angelkeep's twin ash. More of the Deam and Williamson relationship will be explained at an "Edward Bruce Williamson – Bluffton History" book program at Wells County Public Library at 6:30 p.m. January 16. Please attend to hear more about Bluffton's dynamic duo. Bring your own Deam and Williamson stories along. News-Banner has that book available in the office.

History proved Deam and Williamson saved a Deam Oak tree. Not true with ash.

The end nears for the lonely twin ash tree yet standing at Angelkeep. Its base rot from the inside. One day it will join its twin on a pile forming a cord of wood. A cozy hearth fire or campfire will ensue.

Ases to ashes.

Mr. Daugherty is a Wells County resident who, along with his wife Gwen, enjoy their backyard and have named it "Angelkeep."

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Gloria reflects on the boys' first day of Kindergarten

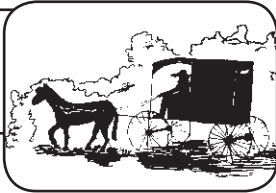
We are home from church. The three oldest boys are playing volleyball in the kitchen (with a soft ball) and Julia, the bookworm, is reading. Hosanna and Joshua are playing with dolls in the living room and are singing German songs.

Today, we had church services at the Lehman residence. Barbara does all she can to make everyone who enters her home comfortable and supplied. I enjoy the wide range of attractive serving dishes she serves her food in. They set up long tables for us to be seated for the noon meal.

After lunch, a group of ladies chatted about the upcoming kindergarten classes. Five children in our church, including our 'little boys', start day one of kindergarten on Monday. (At five years old, they have a series of school work at school, and the rest of prep for first grade is done at home with mom.) When a friend asked what it was like for me to see Jesse and Elijah go to kindergarten for the first time, it touched a deep spot. I was so eager to have more time to invest in three-year-old Joshua and more time with God; at the same time, I also missed Daniel in this milestone. I knew how these

The Amish Cook

by Gloria Yoder



two little boys would be pleased to see their Daddy come to school for morning devotions like other children's dads do.

It's now Monday evening, and the first day of school is over. Have you ever sent a young child to school for the first time? You'd think that after having a couple of children in school, you would get used to it, but then each child has their own story, personality, and place to fill in the family. As my two little boys dressed to go to school for the first time, I stood in awe. Babies grow up!

When Jesse came to tell me bye, memories of past years of adoption, bonding, and countless battles we conquered together passed before me. Could this be happening today? And yes- he's excited and ready to go!

Elijah came next for his goodbye. He was born when Jesse was four months old; now the two boys have grown up together. Elijah is like a little image of Daniel as he comes and gives me flowers and doesn't hesitate to show affection.

Julia is in sixth grade, Austin in third, and Hosanna in second grade. Each grabbed their dinner buckets and report cards. All five were ready to go. Smiles could both be seen and felt.

I stepped back into my emptied kitchen and shut the door. I blinked. Somehow, my tears felt like they were wiped away even before they came. I knew it would be okay. I sat down with Joshua and told him we will have lots of time together on days the boys are in kindergarten. He was impressed with the idea.

I grabbed the broom, and as I swept, I wondered what the next school year would be like when five of our children go to school five days a week.

Daniels' dad stopped in on his way home from having devotions at school. How amazing- yes, his name had been on the chart for devotions this morning, which happened to be the morning the boys went to school for the first time,

and Daddy wasn't here!

The day progressed smoothly at home. By 3:00, the beaming boys opened the back door from their short walk home from school. They had glowing school reports and wondered when they could go again. We had a special snack to celebrate the occasion.

That night, Mr. and Mrs. Lehman stopped by to help on a project (which I will tell you about another day). Looking into my eyes, Barbara asked, "Gloria, tell me how your day was with the boys at school?"

I expressed how I had a very relaxing day, and yes, I could enjoy it.

Her face was radiant as she said, "I prayed that the good would outweigh the bad (sadness of missing Daniel), and that God would just take your tears away so you can't cry!"

In awe, I told her that that very thing happened in a way I had never had it happen before. Together, we marveled. Does God hear? Does he answer?

Barbara brought pizza, and my mom, also here, brought a pot of stew. I set fruit slush on the table for dessert. Oh yes, little Joshua would inform you that we also had applesauce- his necessary staple.

Here you go with a taco pizza recipe. If you want a pizza, but need a simple version, this'll help you out. I made it for Daniel many times over, he never got tired of it.

TACO PIZZA

DOUGH

- 2 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil

MEAT MIXTURE

- 1 1/2 pounds hamburger, fried with onions
- 1 package taco seasoning
- 1 pint pizza sauce

DRESSING MIXTURE

- 1 1/2 cups sour cream or 1 cup milk, scant
- 1 tablespoon sour cream and onion powder
- 2/3 cup salad dressing

Put dough into 9 X 13 inch pan. Spoon meat mixture onto dough, next put on dressing mixture.

If desired, sprinkle with peppers, onions, tomatoes or whatever you prefer.

Bake at 350 for 30 minutes

Activities at Fort Wayne's riverfront areas

A variety of activities are planned at river side areas in downtown Fort Wayne.

The Winter Cozy 80s Apres Ski Party will be held at the Promenade Park Pavilion on Saturday, Jan. 27, from 6 to 10 p.m. Those attending must be 21 or older and admission is \$10 with online credit card only at the door.

On Friday, Jan. 12, 7 to 9 p.m. a Skate Off will be

held at the Headwaters Ice Rink.

The January Sunday Heritage Concert will be held on Jan. 14, from 2 to 3 p.m. at the Promenade Park Pavilion featuring acoustic guitar and vocals by Topher Beyer. On Feb. 11 the entertainment will be an Open Jam Session with folks bringing their own instruments.

"A Night at the Ballroom" will be featured

on Jan. 18, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. at the Promenade Park Pavilion.

A free "Sunday Sweat on the Riverfront" will take place the 2nd Sundays of the month (Jan. 13 and Feb. 11) with Kickboxing with 9Round from 9 to 10 a.m. and Yoga on the Riverfronts from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

More info about the events at fortwayneparks.org.

Jon Winne to be Master Gardener speaker Jan. 18

Wells County's Master Gardeners will welcome Ouabache State Park's Property Manager Jon Winne as their speaker at their Thursday, Jan. 18, 7 p.m. meeting at the 4-H Community Center.

"Native Plants and Pollinators" will be the subject for Winne's talk as he tells of

the "native plants" initiative at Ouabache where native plants are being planted to replace invasive ones in areas of the park. The Friends of Ouabache State Park have obtained grants to fund the projects.

Anyone interested in the topic is invited to attend.

3 time-sensitive money tasks for new widows and widowers

By LIZ WESTON of NerdWallet

Making decisions when you're grieving isn't ideal, but some money tasks are time-sensitive. Your income and expenses are likely to change, so drawing up a budget will be helpful.

Considering talking to a tax professional since your filing status may change. Deal with the credit cards issued in your spouse's name since those could get closed. You have a little more time to decide what to do with the house: A survivor has two years to sell their home and still get the \$500,000 home sales tax exemption.

Widows and widowers are often told not to make any major decisions for a year or more after a spouse's death. Grief can cause you to make choices you later regret.

Some financial tasks, though, shouldn't be postponed. Revising your budget, meeting with a tax pro and securing access to credit can help protect you from unpleasant surprises later.

REVISE YOUR BUDGET
Your income and expenses are both likely to change after a spouse's death, which means it's time to draw up a new budget.

A 2020 study for the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago found income for survivors dropped an average of 37% in the three years after a spouse's death compared with the three years prior. You may have to figure out how to get by without your spouse's paycheck or, if you were both receiving Social Security, how to live on a smaller benefit. (When a spouse dies, the survivor typically gets only the larger of a couple's two Social Security checks.)

Of course, you may have other resources. If you have minor children, you may qualify for additional Social Security benefits. You also may have life insurance proceeds, investment accounts or retirement funds you could use for living expenses. Figuring out how to create a sustainable income

stream from these resources can be complex, so consider getting help from a fiduciary financial advisor. If money is tight, look for resources that provide free or inexpensive advice, including the Foundation for Financial Planning's pro bono financial services and Advisers Give Back, a nonprofit that links people who need financial coaching with certified financial planners.

While some expenses may diminish or go away, others may increase, says Jennifer Murray, a certified financial planner in New Providence, New Jersey, who was widowed at 43. You may pay less for health insurance and groceries, for example, but your tax rates may go up, even if you have less income. This so-called "widow's penalty" is the result of shifting from a favorable married-filing-jointly status to a less favorable single status.

CONSULT A TAX PRO
A tax pro can help you estimate how your tax bills might change, advise you on how to handle inherited retirement accounts and suggest possible tax savings in the year your spouse dies, says CFP Marianela Collado in Plantation, Florida.

Before the year ends, for example, you could take advantage of joint filing rates to make Roth conversions or taxable withdrawals from retirement funds. Also, the ability to "carry over" investment losses ends when the person who incurred the loss dies, Collado says. If your spouse was using a large loss to offset investment gains or income in subsequent years, a tax pro can advise you whether to sell some winning investments to use up that carryover.

You have a little more time to decide what to do with a house you owned with a spouse. Normally, a single person can exclude a maximum of \$250,000 in home sales profits from their income. But a survivor has two years from the date of their spouse's death to sell a jointly owned home and claim a \$500,000 exclusion.

Just don't assume that selling is the right choice, even if reducing taxes on home sale profits is your main concern, Murray says. At least half of a jointly owned home will get a favorable "step up" in tax basis at a spouse's death. This reduces how much of the home sale is considered profit and, in turn, how much capital gains taxes might be owed. In community property states, both halves of the home get this step up.

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ACCESS TO CREDIT

You typically can change the name on jointly held accounts to your own by notifying the institutions of your spouse's death and submitting the death certificate. Credit cards, though, are usually a different matter.

Few credit cards are joint these days. If you have a card with your spouse, typically one of you is the primary account holder and the other is an authorized user. If you're the authorized user, you're technically not supposed to use the card after the primary account holder dies. When the issuer learns of the death, either from the person settling the estate or from Social Security, the account is usually closed.

CFP Patti Black of Birmingham, Alabama, says her family discovered this the hard way. After her mother died, her parents' only credit card was closed by the issuer. Black scrambled to help her 86-year-old father open a new card and transfer all the automatic bill payments that had been charged to the old card.

"My mom was a stay-at-home mom, so it was never on anybody's radar that she would have been the primary," Black says.

Black says had she known the account would be closed, she would have encouraged her father to get his own card before her mother died.

"It was an unnecessary hassle in a time when there were so many other things that needed to be done, and my dad was grieving," Black says.

A Talk with Tego



Willie is an 11-week-old, black, domestic medium hair male.



Waylon is an 11-week-old, black, domestic medium hair, mitten pawed male.



Hank is an 11-week-old, tiger striped, domestic short hair male.



Tego

Tego's Tips: Mouse or rat bait, antifreeze, ice-melting products and liquid potpourri can be deadly to pets.

These are just a few pets available for adoption at the Wells County Animal Shelter, 1613 W. Cherry St., Bluffton. For more information call 824-6063.

Community Harvest Farm Wagon every Tuesday

The Community Harvest Farm Wagon visits Life Community Church every Tuesday at 9 a.m. to give FREE fresh food to needy families. The church

address is 428 S. Oak St. in Bluffton. Enter the parking lot at the south entrance off of Oak Street and park facing North.

Online Directory

Check out these websites of local & area companies and businesses.

<p>WELLS COUNTY 4-H GROWS HERE extension.purdue.edu/wells</p>	<p>JC'S GARAGE DOOR SALES & SERVICE jcsgaragedoor.com</p>	<p>Daniel's JEWELERS daniels-jewelers.net</p>	<p>DAZEYS SUPPLY dazeys.com/bluffton-in</p>
<p>Geddes & Hornum MEMORIAL CHAPEL A Tradition of Caring thegmcfamily.com</p>	<p>3 RIVERS 3riversfcu.org</p>	<p>Myers FUNERAL HOMES A Final of the Family myersfuneralhomes.com</p>	<p>KELLY'S COLLISION CENTER, INC. Owners: Dustin Kelly 820 W. Washington Street, Bluffton kellysautocollision.com</p>
<p>FISHER'S GARAGE DOORS fishersgaragedoors.com</p>	<p>Riverstone DENTAL riverstonedental.net</p>	<p>Bluffton Tire blufftontire.com</p>	<p>MOSER & SON Heating & Air Conditioning 219 E. Perry St., Bluffton moserandsoneheatingandair.com</p>
<p>INNOVATIVE CONCEPTS AUDIO VIDEO SECURITY NETWORKING icav.us</p>	<p>HIDAY AUTOMOTIVE GROUP hidaymotors.com</p>	<p>Edward Jones EdwardJones.com</p>	<p>State Farm Erin Daugherty 260.827.0527 www.MyblufftonSFAgent.com</p>
<p>Lengerich MEATS lengerichmeats.com</p>	<p>Jerry Flack & Associates jerryflackinsuranceandinvestments.com</p>	<p>La Fontaine Center ARHF Community lafontainecenter.org</p>	<p>HOME COURT HOME CARE homecourthomecare.com</p>
<p>Still Waters FAMILY DENTISTRY stillwatersfamilydentistry.com</p>	<p>Bi-County Services of Adams & Wells County bi-countyservices.com</p>	<p>Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home thomarich.com</p>	<p>NBDigital nb-digital.com</p>

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Fuelling's 25, Rosswurm's 19 lead Knights over Saints

By RYAN WALKER

For at least a half, Norwell got itself a good test to cap off the non-conference regular season in a 71-33 victory over Dwenger at the Castle Wednesday night.

The Saints outplayed their 8-11 record and hung around with the No. 14 team in the state, regardless of class, until toward the end of the first half.

Vanessa Rosswurm and Kennedy Fuelling helped spark an 8-0 run that stretched a three-point lead to 11 by the break. The two combined for 19 points in the first two periods and splashed four triples in the process. Makenzie Fuess also nailed a pair of them in the first quarter.

The trio's efforts were enough to keep away Izzie and Giselle, the two Eke's. Both dropped 13 of the 15 first-quarter points for Dwenger and kept the Knights within reach at 18-15.

For teams with a losing record, that deficit was far better than some have fared.



Knights' freshman Alivia Green hits a close shot to give the Knights a bucket late in the first quarter against the Saints. Green played over six minutes helping replace Haley Green, who has been out with a lower body-injury.

"I thought Dwenger's start was excellent," Norwell head coach Eric Thornton said after the game. "I was very impressed with their execution and their ball movement and they made shots in that first quarter."

Giselle is heading to St. Francis in Pennsylvania after her senior campaign. She tallied all five of her points in that first quarter and grabbed nine rebounds to lead her team. But Izzie Eke as a freshman is perhaps with the highest ceiling.

"You look at (Izzie Eke), and she is really going to be special," Thornton said. "Her ability to make shots and to drive and pass, it's just very difficult to play against with that length. It makes you really step it up defensively. Those two kids were definitely a load in that first quarter."

If Thornton's senior-heavy squad has learned anything in their tenure as a Knight, it's making defensive adjustments.

The halftime score was 32-21, but the Saints mustered just 12 points for the remainder of the contest.

Thornton said he asked his team to apply more pressure at the top of Dwenger's offense. Norwell, to say the least, did just that and caused 35 turnovers in the game, seven of them forced by point guard Annabelle Johnson.

"Our defensive effort the last three quarters was really, really good. We really had to work against them, and I thought our kids did that," Thornton said.

As the Knights halted the Eke's scoring attack, the scoreboard lit up on the home side.

The third quarter brought 26 points for Norwell, who launched itself in front 46-23 during a 14-2 run. Rosswurm, Fuelling and Fuess hit five from long range in the period and two more before all sitting the bench in the fourth quarter.

Fuelling led the team with 25 points and is now 112 points away from tying Jessica Rupright's school record of 1,591. She would need to average 28 points per game over the next four guaranteed games of the season, but could get some wiggle room the further the team goes in the sectional tournament.

Vanessa Rosswurm added a double-double with 19 points and 10 rebounds, while Makenzie Fuess scored 15.

Thornton's mission for his team to find a way to be tougher and find a way to win



Norwell's pesky defense of Lilly Norris (left) and Makenzie Fuess (right) tag-team to pounce on Dwenger's Gillian Reidy Wednesday night at The Castle. The Knights went on to win 71-33 and forced a whopping 35 turnovers against the Saints. (Photos by Ryan Walker)

games has been evident this season. The timing was perfect with Dwenger's 3-2 zone defense. Belmont, the final realistic shot at beating Norwell, will travel to The Castle Saturday night and run a similar style of defense.

Last year, the Knights won on the road by three and avoided the Braves in the sectional last season.

Bellmont is currently 12-5 and 3-1 in the Northeast 8 Conference. A Norwell loss would mean tiebreaker scenarios for the NE8 title. A win for Norwell, though, continues the Knights quest in controlling their own destiny. East Noble (10-6, 2-2 NE8) and DeKalb (12-6, 1-3 NE8) would be the only ones left on the schedule.

Norwell will have its hands full, but will seek its first NE8 trophy since the 2021-22 campaign.

"(Bellmont's) very good at what they do; it's going to be a battle," Thornton said. "It's a rivalry, and we've got two more conference games after that, but this is the one we want to get. We have to come out and go take it."

That game will be at 7:30 p.m. Norwell won the junior varsity game 57-16. Jada Dale finished with 15 points, Macie Saalfank 12 and Ashley Waldman 11.

sports@news-banner.com

NORWELL 71, BISHOP DWENGER 33

At Norwell

DWENGER (8-11): Izzie Eke 5-12 0-0 13, Josie Wharton 3-4 0-0 8, Giselle Eke 2-6 0-0 5, Mary O'Brien 1-2 2-2 4, Gillian Reidy 1-3 0-0 2, Anna Ponder 0-3 1-2 1, Cassidy Court 0-0 0-0 0, Grace Barfield 0-0 0-0 0, Taylor Aselage 0-0 0-0 0, Maggie Pieper 0-2 0-0 0, Kaylee Birely 0-3 0-0 0, Lydia Garrett 0-2 0-0 0, Lily Stineburg 0-0 0-0 0. TOTALS: 12-37 3-4 33.

NORWELL (15-4): Kennedy Fuelling 8-18 2-2 25, Vanessa Rosswurm 8-18 2-4 19, Makenzie Fuess 6-17 0-1 15, Ryland Graft 1-2 2-2 4, Dekota Hubble 1-5 0-0 2, Alivia Green 1-4 0-1 2, Addie Norris 0-4 2-2 2, Ammabelle Johnson 0-1 1-2 1, Lilly Norris 0-2 1-2 1, Ali Riley 0-0 0-0 0. TOTALS: 25-71 10-16 71.

Dwenger	15	6	11	1	33
Norwell	18	14	26	13	71

Three-point FG: Dwenger: 6-10 (l. Eke 3-5, Wharton 2-3, G. Eke 1-1, Garrett 0-1), Norwell: 11-30 (Fuelling 7-14, Fuess 3-9, Rosswurm 1-6, A. Norris 0-1), Rebounds: Dwenger: 35 (G. Eke 9, O'Brien 5, Reidy 2, Garrett, Stineburg 1, Court 1, Ponder 3, Fuelling 3, L. Norris 2, A. Norris 2, Fuess 1, Graft 1, Green 1), Turnovers: Dwenger: 35, Norwell: 9, Fouls: Dwenger: 13, Norwell: 7, Fouled Out: None, Technicals: None, JV: 57-16 Norwell.

Alabama's Nick Saban retires after 7 national titles, most in major college football history

By JOHN ZENOR
AP Sports Writer

Nick Saban's coaching reign has come to an end. His dominance over college football, however, will forever linger in lore.

Saban, who won seven national championships — more than any major college football coach — and turned Alabama back into a national powerhouse that shattered an Associated Press poll record for most consecutive seasons at No. 1, announced his retirement Wednesday.

"The University of Alabama has been a very special place to Terry and me," Saban said in a statement. "It is not just about how many games we won and lost, but it's about the legacy and how we went about it. We always tried to do it the right way."

Saban, 72, restored a Crimson Tide program once ruled by Paul "Bear" Bryant to the top of college football after taking over in 2007. As he stacked his wins, Saban's celebrity status reached royalty levels in the state of Alabama.

For a time, he was the sport's overlord and there was little that could be done to stop him.

Saban won six of his titles during his 17 seasons at Alabama. He won his first with LSU in 2003. His Tide teams were ranked No. 1 in the AP poll in a remarkable 15



Nick Saban

straight seasons, breaking the old record of seven held by Miami.

Saban's wife, Terry, posted about their "incredible run" at Alabama on the Facebook page for Nick's Kids Foundation.

"We hope that the Saban legacy will be about helping others and making a positive difference in people's lives as well as the winning tradition on the field," Terry Saban wrote.

Saban's tutelage helped launch the head coaching careers of Georgia's Kirby Smart, Texas' Steve Sarkisian and Mississippi's Lane Kiffin, among others.

He finished just shy of the top in his final season, leading the Tide from a shaky start to a Southeastern Conference championship and back into the College Football Playoff before falling in overtime to Michigan in a semifinal game at the Rose Bowl.

Alabama athletic director Greg Byrne called him "one of the greatest coaches of all time, in any sport."

Saban led the Tide to nine SEC championships and won his first national title at Alabama with a 14-0 season in 2009. Titles came again in 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017 and 2020. He also won the SEC with LSU in 2001 and 2003.

After a 7-6 debut in 2007, Saban won at
(Continued on Page 7)

Blackhawks' Connor Bedard will be out for at least 6 weeks

CHICAGO (AP) — Blackhawks center Connor Bedard is expected to miss six to eight weeks after he had surgery to repair his fractured jaw.

The team announced the operation and timeline for the 18-year-old rookie on Wednesday. It means he will miss the Feb. 3 NHL All-Star Game in Toronto — dealing a blow to the league.

"I think they just are precautionary on a young guy having a trauma injury like that," coach Luke Richardson said. "I mean if it's earlier, great, but I think that's probably a normal timeline for what they were thinking of what the procedure they did."

Bedard got hurt when he was leveled by New Jersey defenseman Brendan Smith midway through the first period of Friday night's 4-2 loss to the Devils. The No. 1 overall pick in last year's draft was hit after he carried the puck into the Blackhawks' offensive zone.

While Chicago has struggled this season, falling into last place in the Central Division, Bedard has been impressive. He has a team-high 15 goals and 18 assists in 39 games.

"I think he'll graduate to the bike in the gym after a surgery, and then get to the (ice)," Richardson said. "But he'll be probably trying to negotiate to get on earlier, I'm sure, but we'll just try and manage that as best as possible."

The Blackhawks' long list of injured forwards also includes Nick Foligno (fractured left finger), Anthony Beauvillier (left wrist), Tyler Johnson (right foot) and Andreas Athanasiou (groin). But Joey Anderson and Taylor Raddysh returned to the lineup for Tuesday night's 2-1 loss to Edmonton.

Seth Jones, the team's top defenseman, also is on IR with a shoulder injury. He hasn't played since Dec. 10.

The 29-year-old Jones wasn't ready to travel with the team for Thursday night's game at Winnipeg, but he is skating again and nearing a return.

"Today was his first day with a practice other than a morning skate," Richardson said. "He did a little bit of bumping today, but we didn't have much bumping in practice so he's going to stay back and do some more tomorrow, and then hopefully join us for a full practice on Friday and go from there."

Tigers crush Squires in wrestling

The Bluffton wrestling team made its mark at Manchester, winning 59-15 on the road Wednesday night.

- Individual results:**
- Rex Moore (M) won by forfeit at 106.
 - Will Frettinger (B) won by forfeit at 113.
 - Levi Johns (B) won over Jordan Owens by technical fall 24-7 at 120.
 - Jed Logan (B) won by forfeit at 126.
 - Parker Nash (B) won by forfeit at 132.
 - Ivan Amantecat (B) won by forfeit at 138.
 - Tallon Selleck (M) won over Kaden Simoson by decision 6-3 at 144.

- Brody Lewis (B) won over Jose Cortes by fall at 150.
- Pierceton Morgan (B) won over Isaiah Burlingame by fall at 157.
- Chris Kramer (B) won over Bryan Fields by decision 4-1 at 165.
- Christian Castanada (B) won over Peyton Neal by decision 6-1 at 175.
- Taven Frees (B) won over Jeffery Ruckman by fall at 190.
- Preston Duffy (M) won over Lukas Gehrett by fall at 215.
- Johnny Cruz (B) won by forfeit at 285.

Bluffton will have a quick turnaround at West Noble at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 11.

High School Calendar

THURSDAY, JAN 11
SWIMMING & DIVING (CO-ED): Bluffton at Manchester, 5:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, JAN 12
BOYS BASKETBALL: Norwell at Belmont, 7:30 p.m.; Bluffton at Heritage, 7:30 p.m. (approx.)
GIRLS BASKETBALL: Bluffton vs. Woodland (at Heritage), 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, JAN 13
GIRLS BASKETBALL: Belmont at Norwell, 7:45 p.m.
SWIMMING & DIVING (CO-ED): NE8 Meet

at Norwell, 10 a.m.
WRESTLING: Norwell, Southern Wells at Garrett Invitational, 9 a.m.
MONDAY, JAN 15
No events scheduled.
TUESDAY, JAN 16
BOYS BASKETBALL: Southern Wells at Adams Central, 7:30 p.m.
SWIMMING & DIVING (CO-ED): Huntington North at Norwell, 5:30 p.m.
WEDNESDAY, JAN 17
WRESTLING: Norwell at South Adams, 6:30 p.m.

Shota Imanaga's contract with Cubs is a \$53 million, 4-year deal

By JAY COHEN
AP Baseball Writer
CHICAGO (AP) — Shota Imanaga's \$53 million, four-year contract with the Chicago Cubs includes a club option that could extend the deal to \$80 million over five seasons.

A person familiar with the agreement confirmed the terms to the AP on Wednesday night on condition of anonymity because it was pending a physical for the Japanese left-hander.

Under the deal, the Cubs can exercise a 2028 option after 2025 or '26. If the team declines the option in either instance, Imanaga would have the right to opt out of the remainder of the contract to become a free agent.

The 30-year-old Imanaga, who got the win for Japan in last year's World Baseball Classic final against the United States, has until 5 p.m. EST on Thursday for a finalized agreement to be submitted to Major League Baseball.

The addition of Imanaga is the first big player move for Chicago since it hired Craig Counsell as manager in November, replacing David Ross in a surprise move. The Cubs were in position for an NL wild card last year before stumbling in September, fading to an 83-79 record after finishing under .500 in the previous two seasons.

Imanaga gives Chicago a replacement for

Marcus Stroman, who became a free agent after opting out of his contract. The Cubs also have lefty Justin Steele and right-handers Kyle Hendricks and Jameson Taillon penciled into their rotation.

Cody Bellinger is a free agent after a resurgent season in Chicago, and the Cubs are hoping to re-sign the slugger. They also could add a corner infielder or two before spring training begins next month.

Imanaga was 7-4 with a 2.80 ERA in 22 starts this year for the Yokohama BayStars of Japan's Central League. He struck out 174 and walked 24 in 148 innings.

Imanaga, recognizable for throwback-style high socks, was 64-50 with a 3.18 ERA in eight seasons with Yokohama, striking out 1,021 and walking 280 in 1,002 2/3 innings.

His fastball averaged 93.5 mph in the WBC final, when he allowed one run and four hits in two innings, giving up a home run to Trea Turner.

Under the MLB-NPB agreement, the posting fee will be 20 percent of the first \$25 million of a major league contract, including earned bonuses and options. The percentage drops to 17.5 percent of the next \$25 million and 15 percent of any amount over \$50 million. There would be a supplemental fee of 15 percent of any earned bonuses, salary escalators and exercised options.

The Classifieds

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				7	6			
		6						7
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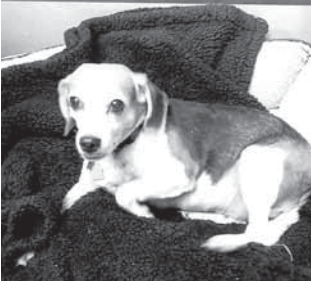
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1/11

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EMPLOYMENT

Help Wanted

SOUTHERN WELLS COMMUNITY School is seeking a second shift custodian. \$20.31 per hour with benefits. Please send a resume of contact rkings@swraiders.com

WELLS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE is currently seeking applicants for the position of Maintenance/Custodian. Applicants must have general knowledge of heating/cooling, plumbing, electrical with the ability to make minor repairs and/or adjustments. Additional responsibilities include building maintenance and ground keeping. 20-year matrix salary range for the position is \$43,682 - \$52,774. Years of service and experience will be honored for a starting salary up to five years in the pay matrix. Apply at www.wellscountysheriff.com under "Job Opportunities". Deadline for Pre-application submission is no later than February 5, 2024. A full job description is also listed on the website for review.

HELOISE HINT: If your supervisor calls you in to give criticism on your work performance. Pay attention to each comment. Do not get angry; just listen and try to improve your performance. Send your job-success story to HELOISE@Heloise.com.

Lottery Numbers

Wednesday's Drawings HOOSIER LOTTERY
Cash 5 — 01-14-17-26-38
Lotto Plus — 06-09-17-20-24-45
Cash4Life — 14-16-40-47-58, Cash Ball: 04
Quick Draw Midday — 03-11-13-14-20-23-26-28-31-53-57-62-63-65-66-68-73-76-78-80, BE: 23
Daily Three-Midday — 01-09-02, SB: 09
Daily Three-Evening — 07-02-04, SB: 02
Daily Four-Midday — 08-04-07-01, SB: 09
Daily Four-Evening — 01-04-08-08, SB: 02
Quick Draw Evening — 10-23-29-31-33-37-45-46-47-48-51-54-57-64-65-70-73-74-75-78, BE: 31
Hoosier Lotto — 12-29-30-35-43-46
MEGA MILLIONS
Estimated jackpot (for Friday): \$187 million
POWERBALL
25-40-43-48-50 Powerball: 11; Power Play: 2X

FOR SALE

Miscellaneous

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Pets

HELOISE HINT: If your cat is acting up and jumping on furniture. First, say "no" and move them away. You can also spritz a bit of water onto its face if it continues to jump on the furniture. Your cat will eventually get the idea and refrain from doing this again. Make sure that they have scratching posts they can use or jump on instead. Fax Heloise @ 210-HELOISE (435-6473).

Line Classified Ad Deadlines
Monday editions: Friday by 4 p.m.
Tuesday-Friday editions: day-before by 4 p.m.
Saturdays: Friday by noon

TO THE OWNERS OF THE WITHIN DESCRIBED REAL ESTATE AND ALL INTERESTED PARTIES NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

By virtue of a certified copy of a decree to me directed from the Clerk of Superior Court of Wells County, Indiana, in Cause No. 90D01-2308-MF-000017 wherein Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. was Plaintiff, and Linda S. Parker, State of Indiana were Defendants, requiring me to make the sum as provided for in said Decree with interest and cost, I will expose at public sale to the highest bidder, on the 14th day of February, 2024, at the hour of 1:00 pm or as soon thereafter as is possible, at Courthouse
102 W. Market St., 1st Fl. Bluffton, IN 46714, the fee simple of the whole body of Real Estate in Wells County, Indiana.

A part of Out Lot Number 5 in the Original Plat of the town of Ossian, Wells County, Indiana, bounded as follows: Commencing at the northeast corner of said Lot Number 5; thence west 50 feet; thence south 150 feet; thence east 50 feet; thence north 150 feet to the place of beginning. Also described as follows: Part of Out Lot Number 5 in the Original Plat of the town of Ossian, Wells County, Indiana, bounded and described as follows: Commencing at the northeast corner of said Lot Number 5; thence west 78 feet Recorded 50 feet; thence south 150 feet; thence east 78 feet Recorded 50 feet; thence north 150 feet to the place of beginning.

More commonly known as: 301 West Lavefer Street, Ossian, IN 46777
State Parcel No.: 90-02-16-519-049.000-009

Together with rents, issues, income, and profits thereof, said sale will be made without relief from valuation or appraisal laws.

Plaintiff Attorney
ATTORNEY NO. 15-23-01022
Codilis Law, LLC
8050 Cleveland Place
Merrillville, IN 46410
(219) 736-5579
15-23-01022

Sheriff of Wells County
JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP
301 West Lavefer Street,
Ossian, IN 46777
Street Address
SHERIFF FILE NO:
The Sheriff's Department does not warrant the accuracy of the street address published herein.

SERVICE DIRECTED TO:
Linda S. Parker
301 West Lavefer Street
Ossian, IN 46777

Type of Service
Sheriff

NOTE: This law firm is a debt collector.

nb 1/4, 1/11, 1/18
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SUDOKU ANSWER

9	1	2	6	7	8	9	1	1
7	8	6	9	9	1	8	2	1
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6	1	7	8	8	9	1	9	2

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Public Notices

ADVERTISEMENT TO BID RECONSTRUCTION OF CR 450 EAST FROM CR 1000N TO CR 1100N WELLS COUNTY, INDIANA
Sealed proposals will be received by the Wells County Board of Commissioners, Owner, at the Wells County Auditor's Office at 102 W Market St., Suite 205, Bluffton, IN 46714, until 10:00 P.M. (Local time) on January 24th, 2024 and then will be publicly opened and read aloud in Suite 104. Any bids received later than the above time will be returned unopened.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK: Work for which proposals are to be received is for the full depth reclamation and asphalt overlay of CR 450 East from the intersection of CR 1000N to CR 1100N in Wells County. The work consists of milling the existing roadway surface and base, compacting the base with a combination of cement and aggregate additives to provide the minimum roadway base and overlaying the entire roadway with a hot mix asphalt. Final work will be to tie all surfaces and roadway features including mailbox turnouts and driveways into the roadway.

BID DOCUMENTS: Prospective Bidders may examine the Bidding Documents at the Issuing Office on Mondays through Fridays between the hours of 8 am and 4 pm, and may obtain copies of the Bidding Documents as described below. The contract documents, including plans, specifications are available in **print or digital** format from eastern Engineering Supply Reprographics, 1239 Wells St., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46808 (telephone: 260-426-3119, fax: 260-426-3101). Printed plans and specifications may be purchased from Eastern Engineering for a non-refundable fee.

Bids shall be properly and completely executed on Bid Forms and in the order as identified and contained in the Contract Documents obtainable from the offices as stated above. Each bid shall be accompanied by a completely filled out Form No. 96 (latest revision) and acceptable Bid Security. Any bid not accompanied by the above-required items shall be deemed to be a non-responsive bid.

No Bidder may withdraw his proposal within a period of 60 days following the date set for the receiving of bids. The Owner reserves the right to retain any and all bids for a period of not more than 60 days and said bid shall remain in full force and effect during said time. The Owner further reserves the right to waive informalities and to award the Contract to any Bidder all to the advantage of the Wells County or to reject all bids.

BID SECURITY: Each bid shall be accompanied by an acceptable certified check made payable to the Wells County Board of Commissioners or an acceptable bid bond in the amount equal to 5% of the total bid price executed by an incorporated surety company in good standing and qualified to do business in the State of Indiana and whose name appears on the current Treasury Department Circular 570.

BONDS: A Performance Bond and Payment Bond each in the amount of 100% of the Contract price will be required from the Contractor to whom the work is awarded.

INDIANA REQUIREMENTS: Standard Questionnaire Form 96 (latest revision), completely filled out and signed, including attachment of Contractor's Financial Statement as stipulated in Section III.

FOR THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WELLS COUNTY, INDIANA
By: Shawn Bonar
Wells County Highway Superintendent

Attest:
By: Lisa McCormick, Auditor
Date: December 21, 2023
oj, nb 12/28, 1/11 hspaxlp

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SECTION 00 11 16 - NOTICE TO BIDDERS & BID PACKAGE INDEX

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN PURSUANT TO INDIANA CODE 5-32, AS AMENDED, that the Norwell Community Schools (the "Owner") and Weigand Construction Co., Inc. ("Construction Manager" or the "CMC"), 7808 Honeywell Drive, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825, have entered into a contract pursuant to which Weigand Construction will be providing all of the Construction Manager as Constructor services in connection with the Ossian Elementary Interior Finishes Refresh. Accordingly, Weigand Construction will be receiving sealed bids from pre-qualified contractors, as determined by Weigand Construction in its sole and complete discretion, for the work and supply of materials for the Ossian Elementary Interior Finishes Refresh (the "Project").

Trade contractor bids will be accepted at Norwell Community Schools, Administration Building - Board Room, 312 Jefferson St. OSSIANS, IN 46777, until 3:00 PM (local time), on January 25, 2024. Bids received prior to 3:00 PM on January 25, 2024, must be mailed and/or delivered to Norwell Community Schools for and on behalf of Weigand Construction Co., Inc., Norwell Community Schools, Administration Building - Board Room, 312 Jefferson St., OSSIANS IN, 46777. Bids will be opened and read aloud by Architect / Engineer at 3:00 PM (local time) at the Norwell Community Schools Administration Building Board Room. A listing of the trade contractor bid packages is provided below.

A Pre-Bid Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 18, 2024 at 3:15 PM (local time). The meeting will take place Ossian Elementary 213 S Jefferson St, Ossian, IN, 46777 (DOOR 1). Site walk and building investigation will occur immediately following the Pre-Bid Meeting.

All bidding and construction shall be in accordance with construction documents prepared by Schmidt Associates. All of the terms and conditions of which are incorporated herein by reference. Bidders desiring digital access to construction and bidding documents shall email Derek Biro of weigandconstruction.com to receive digital access to the bidding documents at no cost. Bidders may be required by Weigand Construction, if set forth in the construction and bidding documents, to confirm or submit for pre-qualification status prior to receiving digital access to construction and bidding documents. Bidders desiring printed documents shall pay for their own cost of printing, shipping, and handling.

Each bid shall include with such bid, a certified check or bid bond made payable to Weigand Construction Co., Inc. for an amount not less than five percent (5%) of the maximum bid. Should a successful bidder withdraw his bid or fail to execute a satisfactory subcontract with the CMC, Weigand Construction may then declare the bid deposit or bid bond to be forfeited as liquidated damages.

Each successful bidder shall enter into a sub-contract and/or purchase order with Weigand Construction. (See section 00 52 00 of the Project Manual.)

Each successful bidder may be required to furnish Performance & Payment Bonds (if Alternate Bid regarding Bonds is accepted) which cover faithful performance of the contract and the payment of all obligations arising thereunder (if Alternate Bid regarding Performance Bond is accepted, it will be made out to Weigand Construction Co., Inc.). Said bonds shall remain in full force and effect for one year from the substantial completion of the work. A bidder's ability to provide said bonds is a condition precedent to bidding the Project, and any bid submitted without an alternate cost for providing said bonds may be determined as non-responsive by Weigand Construction, in its sole and complete discretion, and rejected by Weigand Construction.

The contract will be awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder complying with the conditions for bidding, provided the bid is reasonable and it is to the best interest of Weigand Construction and the Owner.

Bids may be hand delivered and/or delivered by delivery service at the locations listed above. Bids not reaching said location by 3:00 PM (local time), on January 25, 2024 will be returned unopened to the original bidder.

oj, nb 1/11, 1/18 hspaxlp

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Town of Ossian, Indiana Notice of Receipt of Bids Project: Collection System Improvements & Septic Relief ("Project").

Summary: The Town of Ossian intends to construct sanitary collection system improvements for septic relief at the northern limits of its collection system and to relocate the Mill St lift station at the eastern limits of its collection system. Along Dyar Drive, McNeal Circle, SR 1 from 250 ft south of Dyar Drive to 350 ft north of Dyar Drive, and the northern and western limits of Homestead Place subdivision, the Project shall construct 2,800 LF of 8-inch gravity sewers via open cut. Along SR 1 from 300 ft south of the Allen Melott drain to 350 ft north of CR 1050N and along CR 1050N from 950 ft west of SR 1 to 400 ft east of SR 1, the Project shall construct 1,300 LF of 2-inch and 1,400 LF of 3-inch low pressure sewers via trenchless directional drilling. Along Mill St from Maxine Dr to 150 ft east of Lynfield Ct the project shall construct 1,000 LF of 10-inch gravity sewers via open cut, 1,000 LF of 6-inch force main, and a new lift station. The project shall include sanitary gravity and pressure laterals, grinder stations, pavement removal and replacement, erosion control, and surface restoration.

General Plans and Specifications: Complete digital project bidding documents are available at www.questcdn.com. Quest CDN will serve as the Issuing Office and maintain the plan holder list. Digital Bidding Documents may be downloaded for a non-refundable fee of \$22 by inputting quest project number QuestCDN eBidDoc #8913311 on the website's projects search page. Please contact QuestCDN Customer Support at 952.233.1632 or info@questcdn.com for assistance in membership registration, downloading, and working with digital project information. No paper copies will be provided by the Owner.

Pre-Bid Meeting: Beginning at 10:00 a.m., on Tuesday, January 30, 2024, a pre-bid meeting will be held at the Ossian Town Hall, 507 N. Jefferson Street, Ossian, Indiana 46777. All prospective bidders are encouraged to attend.

Federal Funding: Any contracts awarded under this Notice of Receipt of Bids are expected to be funded in part by loan funds from the Indiana State Revolving Loan Fund program. Neither the United States nor any of its departments or agencies will be a party to this Notice of Receipt of Bids or any resulting contract. All Contractors shall be aware of the requirement for the American Iron and Steel provision of this Contract. Bidders on this project shall be responsible for complying with the Federal Contract Provisions contained in these specifications. The prevailing wage rates of the Department of Labor apply to this project. The Labor Standards Provisions found at 29 CFR 5.5(a) apply to this project if the prevailing wage rates of the Department of Labor apply. The Contractor (and Sub-Contractors) must comply with the minimum rates for wages for laborers and mechanics as determined by the Secretary of Labor in accordance with the provisions of the Davis-Bacon and Related Acts.

Bids: All bids must be submitted to the Town of Ossian by 12:00 noon, Thursday, February 8, 2024, to be considered for the work. Bids submitted prior to 11:45 a.m. on February 8, 2024, shall be submitted at the Ossian Town Hall, 507 N. Jefferson Street, Ossian, IN 46777. Bids submitted after 11:45 a.m. on February 8, 2024, must be delivered to the Ossian Town Council meeting location at Collier's Comfort, 215 N. Jefferson St., Ossian, IN, between 11:45 a.m. and 12:00 noon. Bidders are responsible for the timely delivery of their bids. All bids shall be in sealed envelopes bearing the Project title, "Town of Ossian Collection System Improvements & Septic Relief", and include the name and address of the bidder. All bids shall include fully completed and executed Contractor's Bid for Public Work - Form 96 and E-Verify and Iron Investment Certification. Bids shall be accompanied by a bidder's bond or certified check equal to 5% of the bid amount. Bids arriving after the time set will be returned unopened and only complete bids with all required materials will be considered.

Review and Consideration: All bids timely received shall be publicly opened and read aloud at Collier's Comfort, 215 N. Jefferson St., Ossian, IN at 12:00 noon, February 8, 2024. The Town of Ossian, Indiana, reserves the right to reject all bids, waive defects and amend the Project's scope. It is anticipated that the Ossian Town Council will take bids received under advisement and that a determination may be made by April 8, 2024.

By: Town Manager, Crystal Chapman
Town of Ossian, Indiana
nb 1/11, 1/18 hspaxlp

Republicans push ahead with Hunter Biden contempt charge

By FARNOUSH AMIRI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans on Wednesday took the first step toward holding Hunter Biden in contempt of Congress for defying a congressional subpoena. They advanced the charge to a full House vote just hours after the president's son sparked a momentary political frenzy by appearing in the front row for part of the debate.

The House Oversight and Judiciary committees each passed contempt charges against the younger Biden with unanimous Republican support and all Democrats opposed. The action sets up a House vote on recommending criminal charges against a member of President Joe Biden's family as the GOP moves into the final stages of an impeachment inquiry into the president himself.

If the House votes to hold Hunter Biden in contempt, it will be up to the Department of Justice, specifically the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, to decide whether to prosecute.

It's the latest step for the inquiry, which began in September, but has so far failed to uncover evidence directly implicating the

president in wrongdoing involving his son's business dealings.

Hunter Biden has defended his lack of compliance with the GOP-issued subpoena, which ordered him to appear for closed-door testimony in mid-December. Biden and his attorneys said information from private interviews can be selectively leaked and manipulated by House Republicans and insisted that he would only testify in public.

The arrival of the president's son at the Oversight Committee, which has been engaged in a yearlong probe, sitting in the audience with his legal team, including attorney Abbe Lowell, sent the panel into chaos.

One Republican Rep. Nancy Mace of South Carolina, insisted that Hunter Biden be quickly arrested. GOP Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia called him a coward as he left during her remarks. Democratic lawmakers argued that Biden, who has refused to testify to the panel behind closed doors, should be allowed to speak publicly.

Committee Chairman James Comer struggled to regain control. "Mr. Biden doesn't make the rules, we make the rules," he said.

Hunter Biden and his attorneys

left the committee room shortly after, making a brief statement to reporters outside. Lowell reiterated Wednesday that, unlike the president, his client "was and is a private citizen."

"Despite this, Republicans have sought to use him as a surrogate to attack his father," he said. "And, despite their improper partisan motives, on six different occasions, since February of 2023, we have offered to work with the House committees to see what and how relevant information to any legitimate inquiry could be provided."

Hunter Biden's only remarks to reporters were when asked why he had his father on speaker phone several times during business meetings. "If he called you, would you answer the phone?" he responded.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre also emphasized Wednesday that Hunter Biden is a private citizen, and she refused to say whether the White House was informed in advance of his surprise appearance on Capitol Hill.

"He makes his own decisions like he did today," Jean-Pierre said.

If the contempt referral against Hunter Biden passes the full House it would be yet another challenge for federal prosecutors already under heavy scrutiny for their handling of charges against him related to his taxes and gun use.

Shelving the contempt of Congress charges would likely further stoke conservative criticism that the Justice Department is politicized — especially given that two one-time advisers to former President Donald Trump were prosecuted for contempt of Congress by the Biden administration. But prosecuting contempt cases can be difficult.

Further angering Republicans, Hunter Biden did come to the Capitol on the day specified by the subpoena — but not to testify. Instead, he stood behind microphones outside the U.S. Capitol complex — a couple hundred feet away from the awaiting GOP investigators — and delivered a rare public statement defending his business affairs and castigating the yearslong investigations into him and his family.

"There is no evidence to support the allegations that my father was financially involved in my

business because it did not happen," the president's son said in those remarks.

He added, "There is no fairness or decency in what these Republicans are doing — they have lied over and over about every aspect of my personal and professional life — so much so that their lies have become the false facts believed by too many people."

Speaker Mike Johnson gave his stamp of approval Wednesday to the contempt process, saying that the House must uphold its subpoena power.

"We have to do this. This is our role. It's our responsibility," the Louisiana Republican said during a press conference. But, he added, "we're not taking any pleasure in this."

The contempt resolution, released by Republicans on Monday, reads behavior has been "contemptuous, and he must be held accountable for his unlawful actions."

While Republicans say their inquiry is ultimately focused on the president, they have taken particular interest in Hunter Biden and his overseas business dealings, questioning whether the president profited from that work.

Judge says Trump won't give closing argument at civil fraud trial

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump won't make his own closing argument after all in his New York civil business fraud trial after his lawyers objected to the judge's insistence that the former president stick to "relevant" matters and "not deliver a campaign speech."

Judge Arthur Engoron nixed Trump's unusual plan on Wednesday, a day ahead of closing arguments.

The judge had initially indicated he was open to the idea, saying he'd let Trump speak if he agreed to abide by rules that apply to attorneys' closing arguments. Among other things, Engoron wanted the former president and current Republican front-runner to promise he wouldn't assail his adversaries in the case, the judge or others in the court system.

Trump's legal team said those limitations unfairly muzzled him. They didn't agree to the terms by the judge's Wednesday deadline.

"Is anyone surprised anymore?" Trump attorney Alina Habba said in a statement after Engoron wrote that he assumed Trump was not agreeing to the restrictions and therefore would not be speaking.

The trial could cost Trump hundreds of millions of dollars in penalties and strip him of his ability to do business in New York. He's fighting allegations that his net worth was inflated by billions of dollars

on financial statements that helped him secure business loans and insurance.

The former president denies any wrongdoing, and he has lambasted the case as a "hoax" and a political attack on him. The judge is a Democrat, as is New York Attorney General Letitia James, who brought the lawsuit.

The trial came after Engoron decided, in a pre-trial ruling, that Trump had engaged in fraud for years. The judge ordered at that point that a receiver take control of some of the ex-president's properties, but an appeals court has put that order on hold.

The trial concerns remaining claims of conspiracy, insurance fraud and falsifying business records. Engoron will decide the verdict.

It's extremely uncommon for people who have lawyers to give their own closing arguments. But Trump's lawyers had signaled privately to the judge last week that the ex-president planned to deliver a summation personally, in addition to arguments from his legal team. James' office objected, saying that the proposal would effectively amount to testimony without cross-examination.

In an email exchange filed in court Wednesday, Engoron initially approved the request, saying he was "inclined to let everyone have his or her say."

But he said Trump's remarks would have to stay within the bounds of "commentary on the relevant, material facts that are in evidence, and application of the relevant law to those facts."

Trump would not be allowed to introduce new evidence, "comment on irrelevant matters" or "deliver a campaign speech" — or impugn the judge, his staff, the attorney general, her lawyers or the court system, the judge wrote.

Trump attorney Christopher Kise responded that those limitations were "fraught with ambiguities, creating the substantial likelihood for misinterpretation or unintended violation." Engoron said that they were "reasonable, normal limits" and would allow for comments on the attorney general's arguments but not personal attacks.

Kise termed the restrictions "very unfair."

"You are not allowing President Trump, who has been wrongfully demeaned and belittled by an out of control, politically motivated attorney general, to speak about the things that must be spoken about," the attorney wrote.

"I won't debate this yet again. Take it or leave it," the judge shot back, with an all-caps addition saying he wouldn't push back an already extended and imminent deadline to resolve the matter. The deadline passed

without a response from Trump's lawyers.

Earlier in the exchange, the judge also denied Kise's request to postpone closing

arguments until Jan. 29 because of the death Tuesday of Trump's mother-in-law, Amalija Knavs. The judge expressed condolences

but said he was sticking to the scheduled date, citing the security and logistics required for Trump's planned visit to court.

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Public Sale Calendar

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. 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.

JANUARY 14-JANUARY 21 - (online only auction) - Various consignors, sellers. 1999 Ford F350 truck with lift bucket, antiques, display cases, advertising memorabilia, jewelry and pocket watches, Fenton and Indiana glass, mid-century modern, industrial quality fans and tools. Preview: Jan. 16th and Thurs. Jan. 18 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 118 East Craig Street, Ossian, IN. *The Steffen Group Inc.*, 260-824-3006, www.steffengrp.com.

BIDDING NOW OPEN AND STARTS CLOSING JANUARY 16 - 10 a.m. EST - Carmel Wellness and secured creditors, owner. Liquidation of Carmel Wellness featuring decompression table w/tension machine, body and therapy tables, hydraulic tables, washer and dryer, folding tables, chairs, desks, office supplies, and much more! Auction pick up Jan. 17, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. *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 by appointment, 617 N. Main St., Geneva. *Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC*, 260-724-

7402, Kjauction.com.
JANUARY 23 - 2-6 p.m. ET - Online - Farm: Susan Dunn Estate. Property Location: Three miles southeast of Markle, IN and Wells Co., Rockcreek Twp. 207.3+/- total acres, high quality farmland, mostly tillable. Tracts 1 & 2: Located on both sides of 200 N between 200 W and 300 W. Tract 3: Located at intersection of 300 N and 500 W. Tract 1: 19.83+/- acres. Tract 2: 110+/- acres. Tract 3: 77.47+/- acres. *Halderman Real Estate & Farm Management*, 800-424-2324, halderman.com, Rick Johnloz, 260-827-8181.

JANUARY 30 - 10 a.m. EDT - Stetzel Farm LLC. Farm machinery retirement auction. Tractors, planters, harvest equipment, tillage, miscellaneous and farm related, trucks and trailers. Timed online. No reserve. Inspection Jan. 20 and Jan. 29 from noon to 4 p.m., 7204 S 200 E, Warren. Contact Mike Stetzel, 260-450-2370, with equipment questions or to set up an inspection appointment. *Merit Auctions*, 833-273-9300, www.meritauctions.com, auction manager: Zach Hiner, 260-437-2771.

JANUARY 30 - 2 p.m.-6 p.m. ET - Online - Farm: Mann Farm. Property Location: Three miles northwest of Craigville, IN; 1/4 mile south of US 224 along 500 E in Lancaster Township, Wells County. 36.75+/- total acres, 34.5+/- tillable, 2.25+/- non-tillable, high quality farmland, Wells Co. Soil Types: Pewamo silty clay loam, Bount Del-Rey silt loam; WAP1: 140.6 bu. corn, 43.8 bu. soybeans. Additional information, drone flight, photos available at halderman.com. *Halderman Real Estate & Farm Management*, 800-424-2324, Rick Johnloz: 260-827-8181, Neal Wolhuter: 260-336-2219.

FEBRUARY 12 - 6 p.m. - Daniel E. Schloss, Elizabeth L. Burchfield (f/k/a Elizabeth L. Schloss), Estate of Meshell L. Schloss. Wells County 4-H Community Center, Bluffton. Online bidding available. 164+/-A offered in 8 Tracts or combination. Productive tillable land, professionally designed and stocked pond, recreational woods, newer tree plantings w/conservation grasses, potential country building sites, Huntington County, Salamonie Township. Inspections Jan. 13, 10a.m.-1p.m., Feb. 5, 3-5p.m., call for private showing. Auction managers: Jerry Ehle, 260-410-1996, Steven C. Coil, 260-446-2037, *Schrader Real Estate and Auction Company, Inc.*, schraderauction.com, 800-451-2709.

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