

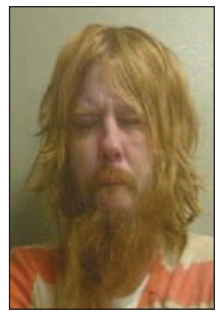
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MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2024 BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection \$1.00

Extradition process is ongoing for Castleman

By SYDNEY KENT
The lengthy process of extradition continues for the Markle man accused of murdering his 72-year-old grandmother in her home late last year.



Anthony Castleman

Anthony Castleman, 37, refused to waive extradition and return to Indiana by his own volition. Because of this, a trail of paperwork must make its way from the Huntington County prosecutor, to the Indiana Attorney General and the Georgia governor. Once both officials approve the paperwork, a warrant will be issued to the Crisp County Jail for Castleman's return to the state.

This is according to Josh DeForce, a media representa-

tive with the Office of the Attorney General. DeForce confirmed that the necessary paperwork has arrived at their office, however, it is not yet clear if Georgia has received the request.

Huntington County Sheriff Chris Newton confirmed the department is well prepared to bring Castleman home to face his reported charges.

According to a probable cause affidavit, a warrant was issued for Castleman's arrest in late November after local authorities discovered the body of his grandmother, Bernice "Dianna" Eubank. Castleman allegedly left the state following her death.

Over a month later, Castleman was taken into custody in a small town in Rochelle, Georgia, according to a press release from the Rochelle Police Department. His arrest was the result of nearly a dozen state and local agencies working in tandem.

Rochelle Chief of Police Jimmy (Continued on Page 2)



Stephen Pastore (left) shook hands with Judge Kenton Kiracofe following the ceremony. (Photo by Sydney Kent)

Wells County probation officer is sworn in to new role

By SYDNEY KENT
Stephen Pastore, a probation officer with the Wells County Probation Department, has been sworn in as assistant chief probation officer in the Wells Circuit Court.

Pastore explained that the role is new to the department, with the position still in preliminary stages of development.

"I'm excited," Pastore said. "This is a great opportunity to expand on some projects we're working on to

provide better service to the county and community."

Chief Probation Officer Greg Werich said he recommended Pastore for the position, which he has advocated for over the last several years.

"It's important for continuity of leadership when I'm gone," Werich explained. "This is my now 37th year as a probation officer, 26 years here. I hired Stephen out of an internship. I've seen him grow and take interest. This will be a natural role for him."

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Wells EMS fund continues decline

By HOLLY GASKILL
"Healthcare is in general scary. What's it going to be like in the EMS world in 5-10 years? I don't know," said Rick Piepenbrink, CEO of Wells County EMS.

In a financial update to the Wells County Council Tuesday evening, Trent Bucher of Honegger, Ringger and Co. advised that the fund that supports county EMS services is on track for total depletion within the next five years. "It's coming," Bucher concluded.

The matter is something county officials have been aware of for years — EMS revenue has remained consistent, but costs continue to grow. A fund established with the sale of the Wells Community Hospital has supported EMS operations, but as the fund has dwindled, the County Council has contributed an additional \$100,000 in recent years to help subsidize costs.

According to Bucher, roughly two-thirds of EMS runs are billable, often meaning the individual required transport to a hospital.

The other one-third concludes with an individual being cleared medically or seeking other transportation.

Of the billable trips Bucher reported, 65 percent are billed to Medicaid or Medicare, which covers a portion of the cost. "We've found that price increases have very little effect on our revenue stream because so many of our ridership is Medicare, Medicaid," Bucher said.

The council has taken some steps to correct this curve — the EMS fund was discussed as a possible beneficiary of an expected increase in tax revenue due to the reduction of property tax credits last September.

Council member Seth Whicker asked Piepenbrink if Wells should consider following in the footsteps of Allen County, where firefighters are being cross-trained as paramedics.

While Piepenbrink didn't take the prospect off the table, he expressed multiple concerns with (Continued on Page 2)

House moves retiree 13th check, hears concerns on school referenda levy cap

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ
Indiana Capital Chronicle
The House Ways and Means Committee on Thursday unanimously advanced a Republican leadership priority bill offering public retirees a bump in benefits.

Lawmakers also heard testimony on legislation that would extend a cap — worth \$87 million — on school operating referendum levies for another year.

House Bill 1004 author Rep. Bob Cherry said that thousands of former employees make just \$800 a month, and some only \$200 a month.

His bill would offer a 13th check between \$150 and \$450 to public retirees — teachers, former state employees and others — based on years of service. Dedicated funding in separate accounts already exists to cover the estimated \$33 million cost.

State police would be eligible for a 1 percent share of the maximum pension for a trooper with certain

years of service, paid from the budget-funded State Police Pension Trust Fund. That's expected to cost about \$400,000, according to a state fiscal analysis.

About 88,000 Hoosiers across the funds would get a supplement to retirement benefits that don't keep up with inflation.

Representatives for public educators and other retirees spoke in favor of the measure, along with union advocates.

The committee approved the measure 23-0. It will next be heard on the House floor. But it already — again — faces an uncertain road in the Senate.

Lawmakers in that chamber have been hesitant to authorize another ad hoc benefit bonus before a two-year task force concludes its work. That body recently recommended that Indiana move to a long-term, mixed approach.

Senate President Pro Tem Rodric Bray, R-Mar (Continued on Page 2)

Millions of Americans face below-zero temperatures

By GILLIAN FLACCUS and CHRISTOPHER WEBER
Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Subfreezing temperatures across much of the U.S. left millions of Americans facing dangerous cold as Arctic storms left four dead and knocked out electricity to tens of thousands in the Northwest, brought snow to the South, and walloped the Northeast with blizzard conditions that forced the postponement of an NFL game.

An estimated 95 million people nationwide faced weather warnings or advisories Sunday for wind chills below zero Fahrenheit. Forecasters said the severe cold

was expected to push as far south as northern Texas while the bitter blast sends wind chill readings as low as minus 70 degrees in Montana and the Dakotas.

"It takes a matter of minutes for frostbite to set in," the South Dakota Department of Public Safety said in a statement Sunday urging people to stay indoors.

In Buffalo, New York, where snowfall of 1 to 2 feet was forecast, severe conditions led officials to postpone the Buffalo Bills-Pittsburgh Steelers NFL playoff game from Sunday to Monday. Winds whipped at 30 mph, and snow was falling at a rate of 2 inches per hour.

Workers with shovels and trucks worked to clear snow from the field at Buffalo's Highmark Stadium as the Bills warned volunteers eager to help with the shoveling to stay at home and not defy a travel ban on area roads.

"Looks like a pretty good day to not have a football game," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Buffalo native, posted on X with a video clip of whiteout conditions in the western New York city.

At least one Bills player was out in the bad weather Sunday putting his newfound free time to good use. Offensive tackle Ryan Van Demark shared a video on Instagram showing fellow lineman Alec

Anderson helping a motorist struggling with icy road conditions.

"Good Samaritan, Alec, helping the people," Van Demark narrates on the brief clip.

Zack Taylor, a National Weather Service meteorologist in College Park, Maryland, warned some parts of the Northeast would see intense snowfall and extreme winds, with gusts up to 50 mph possible.

"That's why they're expecting to see near-blizzard conditions at times," Taylor said.

Across the country in Oregon, more than 130,000 homes and businesses were without electricity, most of them in the Portland

metro area, a day after high winds and a mix of snow and ice brought down trees and power lines.

"Given the extent of the damage and the high level of outage events, restoration efforts will continue into the week and customers are encouraged to plan accordingly," Portland General Electric said in a statement. The utility said it was watching a second weather pattern that could bring high winds and freezing rain on Tuesday.

The City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services said its crews were working non-stop at multiple locations to make emergency repairs and prevent sewer (Continued on Page 2)

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| <p>Inside</p> <p>Local/Area</p> <p>Honor roll 3 Court Docket 3</p> <p>Opinion</p> <p>Niki Kelly 4</p> <p>Also...</p> <p>Sports 6-7 Classifieds 9 Diversions 8</p> | <p>Outside</p> <p>Another freezing cold day, chance of snow tonight</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Today</td> <td>Tuesday</td> <td>Wed.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High 9</td> <td>High 8</td> <td>High 22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low 1</td> <td>Low 3</td> <td>Low 16</td> </tr> </table> <p>More Weather on Page 2</p> | Today | Tuesday | Wed. | High 9 | High 8 | High 22 | Low 1 | Low 3 | Low 16 | <p>Online</p> <p>Follow us on Facebook! Go to www.facebook.com/newsbanner</p> <p>Place Your Classified Ads 24/7</p> <p>Vol. 95 No. 62</p> <p>MONDAY January 15, 2024</p> | <p>SALES — SERVICE — INSTALLATION</p> <p>961 North Main Street Bluffton, IN</p> <p>Comprehensive Technology Systems Integrator</p> <p>Consulting, Design, Installation Equipment Training, Maintenance</p> <p>260-824-8888 • www.stylusav.com • Like us on Facebook</p> | <p>How to contact us:</p> <p>Call us: 824-0224 or 1-800-579-7476 email@news-banner.com</p> <p>On the Web: www.news-banner.com</p> <p>Follow us at: twitter.com/newsbanner</p> |
| Today | Tuesday | Wed. | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Low 1 | Low 3 | Low 16 | | | | | | | | | | | |

Extradition process

(Continued from Page 1)
Banks told The News-Banner he first encountered Castleman on Christmas Day outside of a popular gas station. In an effort to get to know the people in town, particularly on a holiday, Banks approached him.
“He absolutely refused to acknowledge my presence,” Banks said. “I’ve been doing this for 26 years. I knew something seemed amiss with him, but he would not talk to me.”
Banks said Castleman’s

initial reaction further compelled him to believe he could be a subject that was wanted or hiding. He contacted a female officer with the department, Misty Eno, and asked her to approach the man. Banks believed she could have better luck.
Eno reportedly took video footage and photos of Castleman through her body camera while she attempted to speak with him. Banks then sent the footage to detectives in Indiana, who confirmed Castleman’s iden-

tity.
“Not even a few minutes after that, the sheriff made contact with me,” Banks continued. “(Castleman) sat in front of a small store in town. We’re a small community — but it gets busy. Our first thought was to do this in a safe manner so no more innocent people were hurt.”
Banks recounted that during the arrest, Castleman insisted he was someone else and gave officials a false name. His appearance was

significantly different from the mugshot shared on social media as authorities attempted to locate his whereabouts. Ultimately, three matching tattoos led detectives to believe he was the suspect wanted for murder.
“If it was not handled by every agency, exactly the way it was,” Banks concluded, “he would have gotten away. Everyone went above and beyond the call of duty, both here and those in Indiana.”
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EMS fund

(Continued from Page 1)
the concept. Namely, the dual positions are compensated at a much higher rate and require greater training in positions that are already difficult to staff. At this time, Piepenbrink said his team is fully staffed.
Council member Vicki Andrews then asked if there was potential to tighten certain line items. Piepenbrink said he had recently been asked the same question by the EMS

Advisory Board: “Closing the south station would save \$400,000, but nobody wants to do that. I can’t safely cover the county with two ambulances.”
EMS utilizes three stations throughout the county, “one or two going to Fort Wayne at any given time,” Piepenbrink said. Given the time required to make these runs, Piepenbrink said the third vehicle is essential to the county’s emergency services. EMS’s current

average response time is seven minutes and 39 seconds, Bucher reported.
Piepenbrink additionally emphasized how closing the station in the southern part of the county would be a significant disservice to residents in that part of the county. However, this doesn’t appear to be a serious consideration at this time.
Nothing further was decided by the council on Tuesday.
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House moves

(Continued from Page 1)
tinsville, said Thursday that his caucus had learned “a lot” from the task force and is looking at a different approach than the House.
Legislation from task force chair Sen. Brian Buchanan, R-Lebanon, would require the Indiana Public Retirement System board to develop the capability to pay members of certain funds by category: one group would get a 13th check and the other a 1 percent COLA.
Who gets what? Senate Bill 275 says the General Assembly would set the “to be determined” cutoff date dividing the two groups. The bill requires the board to set surcharge rates to pre-fund those bonuses.
“We’ll have a serious conversation about that. I can’t tell you where we’ll land,” Bray told reporters.

fiscal experts on legislation extending a cap on school operating referendum levies.
Chair and author Rep. Jeff Thompson said that nobody could have predicted the growth in assessed value — which increases the amount of money collected — back when pre-2023 referenda were on the ballot.
He said House Bill 1120 is a “decrease in the increase” that schools would get. And he clarified that the decrease is based off the maximum levy to avoid penalizing “frugal” school corporations. They can choose to levy at a rate below the one voters approve or extend.
A fiscal analysis shows that 61 school corporations with 62 operating referendum levies would max out their levies at \$86.7 million less than what they would receive without the cap.
That also means property owners will save that amount.
The biggest losers would be Indianapolis Public

Schools, with a loss of \$12.5 million, and Carmel Clay Schools, with a loss of \$8 million. An additional 21 school corporations could miss out on at least \$1 million each.
Westfield Washington School executive Brian Carmichael called his school corporation one of the fastest-growing schools in the state. He said it gained 520 students in the last year, which came with an 8 percent increase in cost.
Former Rep. Tony Cook, now the executive director of the Indiana Coalition for Growing and Suburban Schools, said the bill “handicaps the ongoing success” of schools like Carmichael’s.
Indianapolis Democrat Greg Porter additionally asked to not penalize “mature” districts that aren’t growing — but still have significant needs for which voters have approved funding.
As education finance expert Denny Costerison testified in opposition to the

bill, Cherry cautioned that assessed values are variable and can easily decrease — in turn lowering the amount schools get through their levies.
“We can’t get you used to spending all that,” Cherry said.
David Ober, from the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, supported the measure because when assessed value grows so much, “there’s a windfall that’s captured.” He said lawmakers should get to decide how that’s handled.
But, he suggested that referenda going forward include projections of how much money could be collected across the lifetime of a levy, instead of just the rate.
Voters, Ober said, “should know what they’re voting for.”
The committee didn’t vote on the bill. Thompson said he was working on an amendment that could limit levy growth in some other fashion.

Weather

Monday, January 15, 2024
(24-hour observations at 9:39 p.m. Sunday)
High: 17; Low: -3; Precipitation: 0.3 inches of snow and 0.03 inches of melted snow
Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 3.88 feet at 9:45 p.m. Sunday

Wells County forecast

Today: Partly sunny and cold, with a high near 9. Wind chill values as low as -25. West wind around 10 mph.
Tonight: A 30 percent chance of snow, mainly after 1 a.m. Cloudy, with a low around 1. Wind chill values as low as -15. West wind around 10 mph.
Tuesday: Mostly sunny and cold, with a high near 8. Wind chill values as low as -15. West wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.
Tuesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 3. Southwest wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.
Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 22. Breezy.
Wednesday Night: A 20 percent chance of snow after 1 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 16. Breezy.
Thursday: A 40 percent chance of snow. Cloudy, with a high near 25.
Thursday Night: A 40 percent chance of snow. Cloudy, with a low around 13.
Friday: A 30 percent chance of snow. Mostly cloudy and cold, with a high near 18.
Friday Night: A 20 percent chance of snow. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 3.
Saturday: Mostly sunny and cold, with a high near 14.
Saturday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 4.
Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 22.

Below-zero

(Continued from Page 1)
age releases into homes and businesses. Portland’s largest sewage pump station, which serves downtown and the surrounding inner city, was under partial service due to a frozen pipe.
Widespread power outages affecting tens of thousands were also reported Sunday in Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. In Nebraska, the Omaha Public Power District asked customers to conserve electricity to prevent outages.
“The weather came on faster and has been more prolonged than anticipated,” the district said in a statement Sunday.
Airports across the country were impacted. More than half of flights into and out of Buffalo Niagara International Airport were canceled. Scores of flights also were canceled or delayed at Chicago, Denver and Seattle-Tacoma airports.
Forecasters also warned that rapid bursts of heavy snow and wind could cause drastic and sudden drops in visibility in eastern Pennsylvania and parts of northern New Jersey and Delaware with some “near whiteout conditions” possible.
Another Arctic storm that’s dumped heavy snowfall in the Rockies was forecast to push further south, potentially bringing 4 inches to 6 inches of snow to parts of Arkansas, northern Mississippi and west Tennessee.
Juan Villegas wore layers of clothing beneath his heavy coat Sunday as he and roughly a dozen subcontractors in downtown Des Moines, Iowa, shoveled away a blanket of snow, which also covered park benches and partially buried fire hydrants the day before the state’s presidential caucuses.
Working in temperatures of minus 15 degrees, Villegas said the best way to feel warm was to “just keep moving.”
“If you stay doing nothing, it’s when you really feel the cold,” Villegas said.
Much of Wisconsin were under advisories through Monday afternoon, with predicted wind chills as low as 30 degrees below zero.

“It’s cold out here,” said Tramel, who told KSLA-TV she bought bread and ingredients for enough soup to last days.
Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders declared a state of emergency in advance to give utility trucks and trucks hauling essential supplies greater flexibility to respond.
Officials in Mississippi’s capital city of Jackson were preparing for days of freezing weather after cold snaps in 2021 and 2022 caused pipes to burst and water pressure to drop across the city of 150,000.
“We feel as confident as we can that whatever comes our way,” Ted Henifin, Jackson’s interim manager of Jackson’s long-troubled water system, told WAPT-TV. He said crews were on standby to respond to any broken pipes.
The wild weather didn’t just bring snow and ice. Record high tides that flooded some homes in Maine and New Hampshire on Saturday also swept three historic fishing shacks into the sea from where they had stood for more than 130 years in South Portland, Maine.
“History is just being washed away,” Michelle ERSKINE said Sunday, a day after capturing video footage of the last two wooden shacks sliding into the ocean.
In Oregon, just south of Portland, 100 trees toppled Saturday, including one that fell on a house and killed a man. Two other people died of suspected hypothermia and a fourth died in a fire that spread from an open-flame stove after a tree fell onto an RV.
The snow and gusting winds had let up Sunday in Oregon, but frigid temperatures meant roads remained treacherous and much of Portland was shut down. In nearby Lake Oswego, Glenn Prohaska was looking for a business that had WiFi so he could book a hotel. With the power out, the temperature in his home had dropped to the 20s overnight.

U.S. military academies focus on oaths, loyalty to Constitution as political divisions intensify

WEST POINT, N.Y. (AP) — For 75 minutes, Maj. Joe Amoroso quizzed his students in SS202, American Politics, about civilian leadership of the military, the trust between the armed forces and the public, and how the military must not become a partisan tool.
There was one answer, he said, that would always be acceptable in his class filled with second-year students at the U.S. Military Academy. Hesitantly, one cadet offered a response: “The Constitution.”
“Yes,” Amoroso said emphatically.
His message to the students, known as yearlings, was simple: Their loyalty is “not about particular candidates. It’s not a particular person or personality that occupies these positions. It’s about the Constitution.”
The emphasis for the next generation of military officers that their loyalty must be focused on the nation’s democratic underpinnings rather than on any individual is a reflection of how the armed forces are being forced to deal with America’s deep political polarization at a time when trust in traditional institutions is eroding.
The role of the military in particular has come under scrutiny as former President Donald Trump runs to reclaim the White House and has laid out an aggressive agenda should he win. It includes potentially using the military in ways other presidents have not. That could mean invoking the Insurrection Act to send units to the border or patrol the streets of predominantly Democratic cities.
Trump’s rhetoric about top commanders also has raised concerns. While in office, Trump once referred

to the military leaders in his administration as “my generals.” Earlier this year, he suggested that a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, retired Army Gen. Mark Milley, be put to death for treason.
President Joe Biden, in his first campaign address of the year, warned about Trump’s rhetoric on the military and its leadership.
With cadets and midshipmen drawn from across the United States, students at West Point and other service academies are aware of the national mood and the potential for political divisions to seep into the military.
They encounter an array of classes on the Constitution and, in some cases, the history of the civilian-military relationship. Each graduate who is commissioned takes multiple oaths at school and during their service. Milley emphasized the significance of the oaths in his retirement address last fall, appearing to take aim at Trump.
“We don’t take an oath to a king or a queen or to a tyrant or a dictator. And we don’t take an oath to a wannabe dictator,” he said.
At the Air Force Academy, the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol was a top subject of discussion in the Civil-Military Relations class when junior and senior-year cadets began the spring semester the next day.
The coincidental timing “brought introspection about their oath as future officers,” said the instructor, Marybeth Ulrich. One result was a cadet-driven initia-

tive, the Oath Project.
“Instigation of potential uprising or any issues on Capitol Hill creates immediate concern for the military and for the larger public as a whole. So we were very aware of the events as they were unfolding,” said 1st Lt. Darrell Miller, now stationed with the Space Force at Buckley Space Force Base near Denver, and one of the 13 students in the class who started the project.
Dozens of former and active duty military members have been charged in the Jan. 6 assault, an attempt to stop Congress from certifying the 2020 presidential election that Democrat Biden won over Republican Trump. A recent Defense Department inspector general report showed that dozens of military members were suspected of extremist activities that included conspiring to overthrow the government, though the number represents a tiny fraction of the more than 2 million U.S. service members.
When the students examined the three oaths they had sworn to, Miller said they realized there had not been much education about them — “a line by line breakdown. What does it mean? What are you really swearing your allegiance to essentially?”
The group suggested more emphasis on the history and purpose of their oaths and also “what you are actually swearing your allegiance to,” he said. One point was showing the distinction between countries where the military professed

allegiance to sovereigns or individuals as opposed to the U.S. military’s oath to the Constitution.
“We knew what it was and the do’s and don’ts, but we didn’t really go into the why,” said 1st Lt. Bryan Agustin, another of the students behind the Oath Project who is stationed at Goodfellow Air Force Base in Texas.
Although the seniors had a short time before graduation, they were able to change some of the language in their commissioning ceremony, adding more history about the oath before it was administered. The incoming basic class that fall also had the history added to their ceremony. According to copies provided by the academy, the phrasing in both cases noted that the oath had its roots in the Revolutionary War and was given to support “the democratic processes and civil liberties that our Founders enumerated in the Constitution.”
Since then, the Oath Project has been instrumental in further changes, including to basic training for new students and to their handbooks. The group’s work also is integrated throughout cadets’ academic and military training. Future plans include symposiums for other service academies and ROTC units.

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Report card: Grading the legislative agendas

Everyone has an agenda in the Indiana General Assembly. I thought I'd round them up for you — complete with a grade.

My grades will be based on key factors, such as whether the agenda makes a real impact, addresses a pressing need or ignores other critical matters.

Gov. Eric Holcomb

Holcomb's agenda includes both governing and legislative priorities. Since it's session, I am focusing on his legislative goals.

Gov. Eric Holcomb pushes his legislative agenda at this state of the state speech Jan. 9, 2024. (Monroe Bush for Indiana Capital Chronicle)

He starts with a variety of regulatory changes that could make it easier for child care providers to find staff. More staff means more seats that Hoosier parents desperately need. The lack of seats — and high prices — keep some parents out of the workforce. The changes must be balanced, though, to make sure child safety is not compromised.

Holcomb also wants to improve reading rates for Indiana's third graders. His idea to require the IREAD-3 test to be taken first in second grade is a shockingly simple change that could make a real difference. The earlier we have data, the more remediation can happen. Remediating on the front end is far better than the other option: making children repeat third grade. It's clear some children are being promoted to fourth grade when they are not ready. But holding back nearly 8,000 children seems a bit extreme. Doing so might well result in them being able to read. But studies show these children are more likely to drop out of school due to the social impacts.

Holcomb's proposal to expand awards from the State Disaster Relief Fund seems pragmatic and helpful, if not pressing.

Creating yet another task force, this one on bail reform, is yawn-worthy, though.

Overall grade: B

House Republicans

House Republicans have a small but interesting agenda. The first is a simple idea that could help fill the tens of thousands of empty jobs in the state. It would allow Hoosiers to receive financial aid from the Frank O'Bannon Grant and 21st Century Scholarship to include job training and not just traditional college coursework. Many youth aren't interested in college anymore and don't believe it's worth the money. But some kind of training, credentials and postsecondary education is necessary to make a living. This could be a nice move with the one caution that it could increase the costs of an already-expensive program.

The House will move a 13th check bill to make right a wrong from last year. To be fair, they weren't the problem. For decades lawmakers have provided an additional check or cost-of-living adjustment to public retirees. But inexplicably, the Senate blocked the move last year and thousands of public servants were left without. The money isn't an issue because it's already sitting unused in a dedicated account.

The House also has an administrative bill to "protect taxpayers and business owners who interact with state agencies." It's nebulous insider baseball. And I haven't been given any concrete examples of the problem they are trying to fix.

Lastly, a move to support Indiana's Jewish community against antisemitism is laudable but more complicated than it seems at first blush.

Grade: B+

Senate Republicans

This caucus is helming efforts to improve literacy. Prior to the bill becoming public Thursday, there has been a lot of talk about the thousands of students who fail the state reading test and don't meet an exception but are still promoted to fourth grade.

It seems like the Senate plan doesn't materially change Indiana's retention policy because it generally codifies what is already in a State Board of Education rule while adding another exception. There is no enforcement and schools will still make the decision, but leaders clearly hope the bill's emphasis spurs a change.

Sen. Pro Tem Rodric Bray, R-Martinsville, addresses the Senate Chamber on Jan. 9, 2024. (Whitney Downard/Indiana Capital Chronicle)

They also want to give the state test in second grade for assessment and to provide more remediation opportunities. But again, the bill stops short of meaningful change in that it doesn't require the students who are struggling to actually go to summer school.

The Senate Republican agenda does include a pretty important bill limiting the use of prior authorization. The term "prior authorization" refers to a practice used by insurance plans to require a preemptive review of a planned service before the insurance plan will agree to pay for that service. It's a big swing that would really help but I imagine it will be amended significantly.

And a bill on child care likely doesn't go far enough. It aims to reduce bureaucracy and red tape to create additional child care seats. That red tape, though, is part of making sure the children are safe. It will be an interesting balancing act. Because it's a non-budget year, there are no incentives or subsidies to help ease the problem.

Grade: C

House and Senate Democrats

House and Senate Democrats are automatically at a disadvantage because they're superminorities. That means Republicans don't need their support to pass legislation, and that most of their own bills are doomed to fail immediately. So, while pushing for things like ballot measures and drug caps are philosophically honest, they also are fruitless.

I do appreciate their focus on property taxes. The rising bills have barely made a dent in discussions on the GOP side, who would rather talk about eliminating income taxes.

And the Democrats are being more realistic that the child care problem is going to take a cash infusion.

I think the best Democrat proposal is expanding access to pre-kindergarten. The program has been around now for almost 10 years but has become stagnant. It would be an obvious way to strengthen literacy. GOP lawmakers raised the income threshold to 400% of the federal free and reduced-price lunch threshold for private school vouchers. Yet, pre-kindergarten vouchers are still limited to 150% of the federal poverty level.

Grade: B-

Niki Kelly is the editor of the Indiana Capital Chronicle, a non-profit newsroom. nkelly@indianacapitalchronicle.com



Niki Kelly

Hoosier Opinions



Believe your own eyes on the Jan. 6 insurrection

U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz kicked off the Indiana Republican exodus from Congress about a year ago, and this first week of 2024 she has been joined by Greg Pence and Larry Bucshon in heading for the exits. It comes as the legal and political fallout from the Jan. 6, 2021 U.S. Capitol insurrection continues.

Rep. Pence and his brother, Vice President Mike Pence and his wife and daughter, escaped the mob with just seconds to spare. The insurrectionists had been chanting, "Hang Mike Pence!"

Rep. Spartz had a jaw-dropping take on the events of that day during a House hearing this past week. "If the January 6 insurrectionists wanted to do an insurrection they would have succeeded," Spartz said. "They were expressing themselves peacefully. It is un-American to call them insurrectionists, they are good Americans."

I, along with millions of Americans, watched in real time what happened that day. The whole world was watching. We have seen the replays. A mob was inspired by President Trump to march on the Capitol, citing claims of massive election fraud that didn't exist. "We won in a landslide," Trump told his supporters on the Ellipse. "This the most corrupt election in the history, maybe of the world. And we fight. We fight like hell. And if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore."

While Trump faces 91 criminal charges - the first former president ever to be indicted - four of them are connected to the Jan. 6 riot, including conspiracy to defraud the United States, obstruct an official proceeding, obstruction, and conspiracy against rights.

"Despite having lost, the defendant was determined to remain in power," the indictment read. "So for more than two months following election day on Nov. 3, 2020, the Defendant spread lies that there had been outcome-determinative fraud in the election and that he had actually won. These claims were false, and the defendant knew that they were false."

According to the Department of Justice's District of Columbia office this week, here are statistics on what happened at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6:

1. More than 950 defendants have been arrested in nearly all 50 states and the District of Columbia. (This includes those charged in both District and Superior Court).
2. More than 284 defendants have been charged with assaulting, resisting, or impeding officers or employees, including approximately 99 individuals who have been charged with using a deadly or dangerous weapon or causing serious bodily injury to an officer. It is one of the largest mass casualty events involving police in U.S. history.
3. Approximately 860 defendants have been charged with entering or remaining in a restricted federal building or grounds. Of those, 91 defendants have been charged with entering a restricted area with a dangerous or deadly weapon.
4. Approximately 59 defendants have been charged with destruction of government property, and approximately 36 defendants have been charged with theft of

government property.

5. More than 295 defendants have been charged with corruptly obstructing, influencing, or impeding an official proceeding (the Electoral College certification process presided over by Vice President Mike Pence), or attempting to do so.

6. Approximately 50 defendants have been charged with conspiracy, either: (a) conspiracy to obstruct a congressional proceeding, (b) conspiracy to obstruct law enforcement during a civil disorder, (c) conspiracy to injure an officer, (d) seditious conspiracy, or some combination of the four.

7. Approximately 140 police officers were assaulted at the Capitol, including about 80 from the U.S. Capitol Police and about 60 from the Metropolitan Police Department.

8. According to Factcheck.org, five police officers died as the result of the U.S. Capitol assault. A Capitol Police release the day after the riots said that USCP Officer Brian Sicknick "passed away due to injuries sustained while on-duty." Four other police officers committed suicide in the days and months after the riot.

9. Ashli Babbitt, 35, of San Diego and an Air Force veteran, died on the day of the riot after being shot in the shoulder by a Capitol Police officer as she attempted to force her way into the House chamber where members of Congress were sheltering in place, Factcheck.org reported.

10. Damage to the Capitol totaled \$2.7 million.

11. Approximately 484 individuals have pleaded guilty to a variety of federal charges and 119 have pleaded guilty to felonies. Another 364 have pleaded guilty to misdemeanors.

12. A total of 52 of those have pleaded to federal charges of assaulting law enforcement officers. An additional 22 individuals have pleaded guilty to felony obstruction of law enforcement during a civil disorder. Of these 74 defendants, 41 have now been sentenced to prison terms of up to 90 months. Four of those who have pleaded guilty to felonies have pleaded guilty to the federal charge of seditious conspiracy.

Donald Trump and U.S. Rep. Elise Stefanik, are now calling Jan. 6 defendants and convicts as "hostages."

"They ought to release the J6 hostages. They've suffered," Trump said last weekend. "Some people call them prisoners. I call them hostages."

Stefanik, who is the No. 4 member of House GOP leadership, echoed Trump's words on "Meet the Press" Sunday, saying, "I have concerns about the treatment of Jan. 6 hostages." On Jan. 6, 2021, Stefanik told NBC News that the rioters should be prosecuted "to the fullest extent of the law."

I saw what happened at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, in real time. So did you. Believe your eyes. The whole world was watching. We still are.

The columnist publishes at www.howeyopolitics.com. Find him on Twitter @hwypol.



Brian Howey

Politicking

The evil of two lessers

Some voters in recent elections have complained about being forced to choose between "the lesser of two evils." In the 2024 election it appears we are heading for a worse choice - the evil of two lessers.

Donald Trump continues demeaning and defaming anyone who disagrees with him. He repeats unproven claims that the 2020 election was "stolen." A myriad of other inaccurate statements has apparently had a negative influence on President Biden who has joined him in the mud pit. Recall it was Biden who promised to "bring us together" - always an impossibility given the conflicting ideologies of Republicans and Democrats.

In his speech last week near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, Biden invoked George Washington as an example of a selfless man who refused to be crowned a king, resigned his commission as an Army general following the Revolutionary War, and limited himself to two terms as president. An aside - Washington engaged in an insurrection according to the definition of that word: "an act or instance of rising in revolt, rebellion, or resistance against civil authority or an established government" (dictionary.com). Wasn't the British government "established" over the colonies, however tyrannical it was? Some insurrections turn out better than others. The



Cal Thomas

insurrection at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 - whether one believes it fits the definition or not - was still a rebellion against a legitimately established government with the express purpose of changing the election results. But I digress.

Biden's speech shows voters that 2024 is shaping up as a contest between two lightweights pretending to be heavyweights. If Trump is elected, Biden said, America will become like Germany in the '30s. The very future of democracy is at stake, he claimed. This is how Democrats think. Only when they win elections is the country safe.

This isn't Biden's first trip into the mud. During the 2012 presidential campaign Vice President Biden told a Black audience that Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney "would put you all back in chains."

Biden apparently thinks his posturing as a pugilist, rather than a pragmatist, will allow him to out-punch Trump. That isn't likely to happen as Biden has been viewed as a nice guy. No one calls Trump nice.

Where is this corrosive language getting us? Why can't we have a true debate over the best ways to fix our problems? Claiming your opponent would rule like a Nazi, or that the other is a crook, solves nothing.

When polls show Biden and his policies are increasingly unpopular

the president has two choices. One is to change course, which he is unlikely to do because that would mean acknowledging he has been wrong. When was the last time you heard a politician admit error? The other avenue is to ignore his failed policies - from the open border, to the national debt, crime, and foreign policy - and claim if he loses to Trump, it will be Armageddon time for the country. That strategy is not working, so far.

Polls also show most Democrats and Republicans prefer neither candidate. If Trump's upcoming criminal trials result in convictions, that might diminish his appeal except to the Kool-Aid drinkers. Perhaps Biden's potential impeachment, if the evidence of financial wrongdoing by his family can be proven, might have the same effect on some of the president's supporters, but this late in the game it seems unlikely.

One scenario that could assuage voter angst: Could the rules be changed at both conventions this summer so that if Trump and Biden win enough of their primaries to claim the nomination of their respective parties, the delegates could vote to replace them? One might wish leaders of both parties could get together and offer a deal that promises "we'll not nominate our guy if you agree not to nominate your guy." That might sound appealing to some, but it also seems equally unlikely. Too bad for America.

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THE NEWS-BANNER
 (USPS 059-200)
 Evening News est. 1892 • Evening Banner est. 1899 • Consolidated 1929
 Telephone George B. Witwer, Chairman of the Board Fax
 Number Diann Brown, President, Publisher Number
 260-824-0224 Holly Gaskill, Editor 260-824-0700

Periodicals Postage Paid at Bluffton, IN. Published every day except Sundays and Principal Holidays at 125 N. Johnson Street, Bluffton, IN. 46714. Post Office Box 436.

Opinions expressed on this page do not necessarily represent the views of this newspaper.

What's happening at the Wells County Public Library

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

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

Craft Club

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Tuesday, Jan. 16 from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m.

Adults. Bring a current travel-sized project and your materials with you to work on your craft projects while chatting with others and learning from each other. Open to those that knit, crochet, embroider, quilt, paper craft, and more. See what materials the library has to assist you as well. Registration appreciated, but not required.

Kids' Club

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Tuesday, Jan. 16 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

A club for kids in K-3rd grade who enjoy fun stories, activities, and crafts! The meeting will be held in the Story Hour room every third Tuesday of the month. The program lasts about an hour. Registration appreciated.

Bluffton History Talk with Alan Daugherty

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Tuesday, Jan. 16: 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Adults. Alan Daugherty will be sharing

information from his new book on Edward Bruce

Williamson and Bluffton History. E.B. Williamson was a renowned naturalist with a particular interest in dragonflies and damselflies, as well as, a botanist and iris breeder. Learn more about his life from the early 1900s and how he ties into Bluffton's history. Registration appreciated.

How to Play Pokémon TCG!

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Wednesday, Jan. 17 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Grades 6-12. We will be joined by Dustin Leimgruber, an official Pokémon League judge who has been to tournaments across the U.S., Canada, England, and even the 2023 World Championships in Japan. Hear about what the tournament circuit is like and how you can get started on your own competitive journey. Then stay to learn how to play Pokémon TCG or get advice on strategy! The library will be able to provide some starter decks, but please bring your own cards if able. Registration required.

Theater Thursday

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Thursday, Jan. 18 at 10 a.m.

Adults. Join us for a movie, popcorn, and snacks. Sponsored by the Bluffton Parks & Recreation and the Friends of the Library. No registration needed.

Board Game Night

At the Ossian Branch Library: Thursday, Jan. 18 from 6-8 p.m.

Adults (18+). Join us for a night of tabletop games at the Ossian Branch. Registration appreciated.

Interactive Movie: Club 456

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Thursday, Jan. 18: 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Grades 4-6. Connect with an interactive movie experience featuring "The Emperor's New Groove." All supplies provided. Registration requested.

Saturday Movies

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Saturday, Jan. 20 at 11 a.m.

All ages. Drop-in for a family-friendly movie under the stars in the Story Hour Room.

Trivia Night At The Parlor City Brewing Company

Sunday, Jan. 21 from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m.

Adults (21+). Grab a team of up to four people and test your knowledge on a variety of subjects, from pop culture, sports, local history, and other trivia categories. Prizes awarded; space is limited. Sign up at the library or online at wellscollibrary.org.

Golden Gamers

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Tuesday, Jan. 23 from 3 to 5 p.m.

Adults. Are you bored? Do you need some social interaction? Come and enjoy two hours of socializing, games, and snacks. Registration appreciated.

Fort Wayne Philharmonic Performance

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Thursday, Jan. 25 from 7 to 8 p.m.

All ages. The Fort Wayne Philharmonic will be at the library for this Stories in Music community ensemble show. Join



us as we musically explore the children's book "Where the Wild Things Are" through music, featuring the Calhoun Brass Quintet. The book will be narrated by Philharmonic staff member, Abby Cleveland. Registration appreciated.

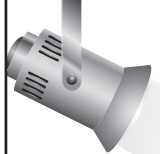
Library Hours

At the main library in Bluffton — Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

At the Ossian branch library — Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon.

Access the library online at www.wellscollibrary.org for digital books, magazines, online databases, event info, and more.

Norwell Internship Spotlight award Lillian Norris



Senior Lillian Norris has been selected to receive the Norwell High School Internship Spotlight award. She has been doing her experience with Norwell High School Spanish teacher and Riley Marathon Director Lori White. Lillian is the daughter of Event and Kristy Norris of Ossian.

Lillian is the President of The Riley Dance Marathon, and helps raise funds for Riley Children's Hospital throughout the entire school year. Lilly

spends countless hours coordinating and planning many events with Mrs. White. The main thrust of the program is to raise funds, do promotional work, communicate with executives, and obtain supplies. In the Spanish classrooms, Lillian assists with grading, runs errands, and observes Mrs. White with her classroom teaching techniques and management styles.

Lilly plans to attend an undecided college to



Lillian Norris

obtain her Masters in Business Administration.

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.

MARRIAGE

TUNE UP

Marriage Tune-Up Weekend at Hope Missionary Church

"Who says working on your marriage has to feel like work?"

Marriage speakers Jeff & Debbie McElroy of Forever Families have a heart for ministering to couples and will be leading the 2024

Marriage Tune-Up Weekend at Hope Missionary Church in Bluffton on January 26-27. The cost for the event is \$79 per couple.

For more information and to register, go to www.hope4thefamily.com/events.

Special Feature

Your MONEY \$ Your TAXES

Learn how to budget and save for big-ticket items

When faced with making a significant purchase, or even financing an unexpected emergency expense, consumers are tempted turn to credit to pay for the goods or services. While credit utilization maintains an important place in building a strong financial reputation, it can quickly put a person underwater financially, and interest fees can increase the price of big-ticket items by a significant amount.

The financial resource The Motley Fool says American households carried a total of \$17.1 trillion in debt as of the second quarter of 2023. A report from Equifax Canada indicated Canadian consumer debt rose to \$2.32 trillion in 2023. Substantial consumer debt can limit financial flexibility, so individuals who are looking ahead to new vehicles or vacations or even home renovations can first try to save for such expenses in lieu of borrowing. Budgeting and saving may not lead to immediate gratification, but it can help consumers avoid debt and ultimately create more financial flexibility down the road.

- Know exactly what you have. Too often people take a casual approach to their finances. At any given time they may not know whether the money they're making is actually covering all of the bills, and how much money, if any, is left over. Spend a few months cataloguing all credits and debits to your accounts. Pay attention to times of year when income is higher or when spending increases.

- Know your goal and price. Rayhons Financial, a financial services company, suggests identifying exactly how much you'll need for a purchase. Estimate on the high side of expenses so as not to go over budget. Treat a big-ticket item just like a utility bill.

- Create a separate expense account. When all of your funds are together in one bank account, it is easier to spend the money on other purchases rather than the larger one in mind. Open a separate account and move your "extra" earnings into that account to save for your large expense. Automating the savings by setting up an automatic deduction deposited into this account

on payday can make savings even easier.

- Review your budget periodically. Figure out if there are areas where you can cut back and allocate more money to your overall savings or the special savings for the big-ticket item. For example, you may be able to downgrade to a more manageable mobile phone plan or dine out less frequently.

- Time the purchase right. In addition to only buying when you have the money saved, you can look at the calendar to figure out the best time to make that purchase. Does your state or province offer a sales tax holi-



day? Some times of year you may get a bonus, tax refund or birthday gifts that can be earmarked for big-ticket items. Avoid

purchasing big items during times when you must pay for other significant expenses, such as tuition, summer camp fees and

insurance payments. Some simple financial planning can help people save and budget for big-ticket items more readily.

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State lawmakers move forward with bill to ban antisemitism

As well as a bill to expand workforce training funds

By CASEY SMITH
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Indiana lawmakers are fast-tracking a bill they say will ban antisemitism in public educational institutions — although critics of the proposal maintain it limits free speech and conflates anti-Jewish rhetoric with criticism of a foreign government.

The legislation advanced from the House Education Committee on Wednesday in a bipartisan 12-0 vote, sending it to the full chamber.

Authored by Republican Rep. Chris Jeter, of Fishers, House Bill 1002 is a priority measure for the House GOP caucus.

Indiana law already bans discrimination on the basis of race and “creed,” which means religion. The legislation 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 Israel similar to that leveled against any other country” is not antisemitism.

“This bill does not tell anybody what they can or cannot say, does not tell anybody what they can or cannot do. There’s no new crime. There’s no police force enforcing it. It’s simply a reflection of our values as a state when it comes to teaching our youth and our students,” Jeter said before the House Education Committee on Wednesday. “We have a long tradition of support for our Jewish community, and particularly our Jewish students. This bill reaffirms that — it makes it clear that they’re going to be safe here.”

Jeter filed an identical bill in 2023. It passed out of the House in a 97-0 vote but never received a committee hearing in the Senate, effectively killing the proposal.

Sen. Jeff Raatz, R-Richmond, who chairs the Senate Education

Committee, said last month that he expects his chamber to support the bill this time around.

Antisemitism on Hoosier campuses

Some 40 people testified on the bill Wednesday at the Indiana Statehouse. Many were students or faculty at Indiana colleges, including Indiana and Purdue universities. A handful of high school students also spoke before lawmakers, sharing stories about various antisemitic incidents in their classrooms.

Rabbi Sue Silberberg, executive director at IU Hillel, said the bill is a much-needed response to a problem she has “faced and struggled with” during her tenure at Indiana University.

Since the Hamas attack in October, she said antisemitic chalkings, drawings on bridges and flyers hung around the campus have prompted an increase of scared and crying students to her office.

“I’ve seen antisemitism regularly throughout my years at IU. Thankfully, IU has tried to address it,” Silberberg said. “But the overarching problem has been that Indiana does not have a clear and strong definition of antisemitism, and it is not specifically identified or called out as a problem and something that we stand behind prohibiting or stopping in our state.”

At Purdue, public health student Honor Fuchs said she has faced antisemitism “in the form of wildly biased curriculum, hateful posters on campus and outright verbal attacks from students.”

She described an experience last fall, when she and other Jewish students were “mobbed, yelled at and insulted by fellow students” while holding a fundraiser on the campus.

“I couldn’t complain, because being called a Nazi pales in comparison to the real persecution my grandparents faced in Nazi-occupied Romania,” Fuchs said. “It is horrifying that in 2024, in the United States, I have to make these calculations of gradations of bigotry and discrimination.”

Günther Jikeli, associate direc-

tor of IU’s Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, also supported Jeter’s bill, noting that criticism of Israel is not the same as “wanting to destroy this person or this community or this state.”

But more than two-dozen critics of the bill pushed back, many emphasizing that criticism of the Israeli government does not amount to antisemitism. Some warned of witch hunts under the vague definition.

Daniel Segal, representing Jewish Voice for Peace — Indiana, said the bill “undermines the struggle against antisemitism and would thus make me and other Jews less safe in Indiana.”

“House Bill 1002 makes it harder to fight the scourge of antisemitism, because its sole purpose is to sow confusion about antisemitism. We cannot fight what we are confused about,” he continued.

“If people want to respond to criticisms of the Israeli state, they should provide reasoned counter arguments, not fake charges of antisemitism,” Segal said. “Defenders of the Israeli state resort to these fake charges of antisemitism only when they lack such reasoned counter arguments.”

He added that the legislation would also “trample education” by making teachers and students “fearful of speaking openly, in regard to the history and current events in Israel and Palestine.”

Echoing others who testified, Anisse Adni, an Islamic studies teacher in Indianapolis, said lawmakers should take out “vague and ambiguous language” in the bill “that would restrict our constitutional right to freedom of speech.”

“If I, as an American citizen, have the right to criticize my own government’s policies — if I have the right as an American to ask my government to right its wrongs, to change its policies — and I have no fear of punishment or reprisal because free speech is enshrined in the constitution ... Why would I, as an American, be okay with my right of free speech being impeded or restricted when criticizing a foreign government’s policies? It

shouldn’t be wrong.”

“I’m not anti-Chinese if I criticize China’s government policies or their behaviors or whatever it may be,” he continued. “We should not conflate antisemitism with criticism of the Israeli government and its policies.”

Fixes to last year’s workforce training legislation

House lawmakers additionally advanced a bill that seeks to make fixes to a major work-based learning bill adopted during the 2023 session.

The new measure, House Bill 1001, authored by Rep. Chuck Goodrich, R-Noblesville, primarily seeks to allow money from the 21st Century Scholars program and Frank O’Bannon grants to be used by high school graduates for training by an approved intermediary, employer or labor organization — rather than for education costs at a college or university.

The bill would also permit annual career savings account grants to be used by students to cover costs associated with obtaining drivers licenses, and extend the timeline for completing CSA applications.

Transition to teaching scholarships

The House Education Committee additionally voted unanimously on Wednesday to advance House Bill 1042, which stipulates that any dollars leftover at the end of each fiscal year from the Next Generation Hoosier Educators Scholarship Fund can be reappropriated to the state’s Transition to Teaching Scholarships.

Bill author Rep. Dave Heine, R-Fort Wayne, said the change could make an additional \$3 million available for teaching scholarships.

Last year, Goodrich similarly authored HEA 1002, which put in motion statewide career-centered education and training programs that seek to graduate Hoosier students who are better prepared for the workforce. Paramount to that legislation was a provision to establish CSAs for students in grades 10-12 to pay for career training outside their schools.

Participating students can

use the \$5,000 CSAs to pay for apprenticeships, career-related coursework, or certification.

Goodrich said his 2024 bill “widens the scope” of how those funds can be used and “removes barriers” faced by some Hoosier students who tried to access technical education and work-based learning opportunities over the summer.

Democrats on the committee took issue with multiple provisions in the bill, however.

Rep. Ed DeLaney, D-Indianapolis, pointed to language that expands the use of state-sponsored scholarships, which he said leaves out spending cap stipulations or specific restrictions around what funds can and can’t be used for.

“We’re going to enter into the program without any guidance for how much we’re going to spend?” DeLaney questioned.

Committee chairman Rep. Bob Behning, R-Indianapolis, said the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (CHE) will instead have to decide when 21st Century and Frank O’Bannon funds are eligible for students post-high school.

Democratic Rep. Vernon Smith, D-Gary, also expressed concerns over the provision to fund drivers licenses.

“Are we going to start buying used cars, too? Will the next step be uniforms, or technical equipment, coming out of the scholarship accounts?” he asked.

Goodrich said in response that access to transportation “has been a huge issue for kids getting access to opportunities.”

Before voting on the bill, the committee unanimously adopted two amendments offered by Goodrich; one to clarify data reporting requirements associated with work-based learning programs, and another to add teaching to Indiana’s Next Level Jobs Employer Training Program grants.

DeLaney offered other amendments but they all failed.

The bill passed out of the committee in a 9-4 vote along party lines. DeLaney promised to call additional amendments to the bill on the House floor.

Iowa principal who risked life to protect students during high school shooting has died

By SCOTT McFETRIDGE
and TRISHA AHMED
Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — An Iowa principal who put himself in harm’s way to protect students during a school shooting earlier this month died Sunday, a funeral home confirmed.

Caldwell Parrish Funeral Home & Crematory confirmed the death of Perry High School Principal Dan Marburger after the family announced it on a GoFundMe page.

Marburger was critically injured during the Jan. 4 attack, which began in the school’s cafeteria as students were gathering for breakfast before class. An 11-year-old middle school student was killed in the shooting, and six other people were injured. The 17-year-old student who opened fire also died of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot.

The day after the shooting, the state Department of Public Safety said Marburger “acted selflessly and placed himself in harm’s way in an apparent effort to protect his students.”

News of Marburger’s death was first posted on a GoFundMe page for his family. The post, by Marburger’s wife, Elizabeth, said he died at about 8 a.m. Sunday, and said: “Dan lost his battle. He fought hard and gave us 10 days that we will treasure forever.”

The news that Marburger died triggered a flood of support on the Perry Facebook page with nearly 200 people posting condolences within the first hour after it was posted.

Iowa Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds offered her condolences.

“Our entire state is devastated by the news of Dan Marburger’s death,” she said in a statement Sunday. “Dan courageously put himself in harm’s way to protect his students, and ultimately gave his own life to save them. He will forever be remembered for his selfless and heroic actions. May he rest in peace.”

Reynolds ordered all flags in Iowa to be lowered to half-staff on Sunday and to remain that way until sunset on the day of Marburger’s funeral and interment. People, businesses, schools and local governments are also encouraged to fly the flag at half-staff for the same length of time as a sign of respect, the statement said.

In a Facebook post on the night of the shooting, the principal’s daughter, Claire Marburger, called her father a “gentle giant” and said it wasn’t surprising that her father tried to protect his students.

“As I heard of a gunman, I instantly had a feeling my Dad would be a victim as he would put himself in harms way for the benefit of the kids and his staff,” his daughter wrote. “That’s just Dad.”

Marburger had been principal since 1995. Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation spokesman Mitch Mortvedt said after the shooting that Marburger did some “pretty significant things” to protect others, but didn’t release details. Perry Superintendent Clark Wicks said Marburger was a “hero” who intervened with the teenage gunman so students could escape.

An 11-year-old sixth grader, Ahmir Joliff, was killed in the shooting. Authorities said he was shot three times.

The shooting happened just after 7:30 a.m. on Jan. 4, shortly before classes were set to begin on the first day back after winter break. Mortvedt said the shooting started in the cafeteria, where students from several grades were eating breakfast, then spilled outside the cafeteria but was contained to the north end of the school.

Authorities said the suspect, identified as Dylan Butler, had a pump-action shotgun and a small-caliber handgun. Mortvedt told The Associated Press that authorities also found a “pretty rudimentary” improvised explosive device in Butler’s belongings, and that experts advised “it was something that they needed to disarm.” It was rendered safe.

Netanyahu: no one can halt Israel’s war to crush Hamas, including world court

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel will pursue its war against Hamas until victory and will not be stopped by anyone, including the world court, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a defiant speech Saturday, as the fighting in Gaza approached the 100-day mark.

Netanyahu spoke after the International Court of Justice at The Hague held two days of hearings on South Africa’s allegations that Israel is committing genocide against Palestin-

ians, a charge Israel has rejected as libelous and hypocritical. South Africa asked the court to order Israel to halt its blistering air and ground offensive in an interim step.

“No one will stop us, not The Hague, not the axis of evil and not anyone else,” Netanyahu said in televised remarks Saturday evening, referring to Iran and its allied militias.

The case before the world court is expected to go on for years, but a ruling on interim steps could

come within weeks. Court rulings are binding but difficult to enforce. Netanyahu made clear that Israel would ignore orders to halt the fighting, potentially deepening its isolation.

Israel has been under growing international pressure to end the war, which has killed more than 23,000 Palestinians in Gaza and led to widespread suffering in the besieged enclave, but has so far been shielded by U.S. diplomatic and military support.

Thousands took to the

streets of Washington, London, Paris, Rome, Milan and Dublin on Saturday to demand an end to the war. Protesters converging on the White House held aloft signs questioning President Joe Biden’s viability as a presidential candidate because of his staunch support for Israel during the war.

Israel argues that ending the war means victory for Hamas, the Islamic militant group that has ruled Gaza since 2007 and is bent on Israel’s destruction.

The war was triggered by a deadly Oct. 7 attack in which Hamas and other

militants killed some 1,200 people in Israel, mostly civilians.

North Korea says it tested solid-fuel missile tipped with hypersonic weapon

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea on Monday said it flight-tested a new solid-fuel intermediate-range missile tipped with a hypersonic warhead as it pursues more powerful, harder-to-detect weapons designed to strike remote U.S. targets in the region.

The report by North Korea’s state media came a day after the South Korean and Japanese militaries detected the launch from a site near the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, in the North’s first ballistic test of 2024.

The launch came two months after North Korea said it successfully tested engines for a new solid-fuel intermediate-range missile, which reflected a push to advance its lineup of weapons targeting U.S. military bases in Guam and Japan.

The North’s official Korean Central News Agency said Sunday’s launch was aimed at verifying the reliability of the missile’s solid-fuel engines and the maneuverable flight capabilities of the hypersonic warhead. It described the test as a success.

KCNA did not mention whether North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was present at the test, which it said was part of the country’s regular weapons development activities.

South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missile flew about 620 miles before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. The North’s existing intermediate-range missiles, including the Hwasong-12 that may be able to reach the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam, are powered by liquid-fuel engines, which need to be fueled before launch and cannot stay fueled for long periods of time.

Missiles with built-in solid propellants can be made ready to launch fast-

er and are easier to move and conceal, which theoretically makes it harder for adversaries to detect and preempt the launch in advance.

The North since 2021 has also been testing hypersonic weapons, which are designed to fly at speeds in excess of Mach 5, or five times the speed of sound. If perfected, such systems could potentially pose a challenge to regional missile defense systems because of their speed and maneuverability.

Hypersonic weapons were part of a wish-list of sophisticated military assets Kim unveiled in 2021, along with multi-warhead missiles, spy satellites, solid-fuel long-range missiles and submarine-launched nuclear missiles.

The North last year tested a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile for the first time, which added to its arsenal of weapons targeting the U.S. mainland, and also launched its first military reconnaissance satellite in November.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest point in years after Kim in recent months ramped up his weapons demonstrations. The United States and its allies Seoul and Tokyo responded by strengthening their combined military exercises and sharpening their nuclear deterrence strategies.

There are also concerns about an alleged arms cooperation between North Korea and Russia as they align in the face of separate, intensifying confrontations with Washington. In their latest sign of diplomacy, a North Korean delegation led by Kim’s foreign minister, Choe Sun Hui, left Pyongyang on Sunday for a visit to Russia at the invitation of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, KCNA said. The report did not specify what would be discussed.

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