

The News - Banner

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Plan Commission to hear from Paddlefish Solar

By JONATHAN SNYDER
 It was training day for the Wells County Area Plan Commission on Thursday, as it reviewed its rules of procedure, what zoning and overlay districts mean and what its March 7 meeting might look like. The reminders on procedure come at a needed time for the Area Plan Commission as they announced a petition from Paddlefish Solar to add a power overlay district roughly southwest of Liberty Township. This comes after the Wells County Commissioners approved of decommissioning and road use documents on Dec. 4. This rezoning will be discussed in the APC's March 7 meeting, and a special meeting on Feb. 15 will hammer out some of the details regarding procedures on the seventh. The March 7 meeting will be held in the 4-H Expo Hall to accommodate for an estimated increase in public visitation. Paddlefish Solar representative Trena Roudebush, who has worked on the project for about three years, stated that the public has been curious about the project itself. APC Executive Director Mike Lautzenheiser also reminded the board that the petition is purely about the property rezoning, and that a development plan is yet to be created. In a PowerPoint presentation, Lautzenheiser noted that the overlay district will simply layer rules onto an already existing plot of land, not rezone it entirely. He urged the APC to remember that
 (Continued on Page 2)



Swearing in

Ossian Police Department welcomed their second new full-time officer, Josh Ware. Ware was sworn in (right) on Saturday, Jan. 27.

Above, Ossian Police Chief Kurt Jack and Ware shake hands. Jack said he is excited for the new recruits and believes they will both be highly effective officers.

(Photos provided)



Lawmakers advance bill to lighten load on school counselors

By CASEY SMITH
Indiana Capital Chronicle
 Hoosier lawmakers want to guarantee school counselors have more time to provide services for students that are increasingly in demand while spending less time filling in elsewhere, like as substitute teachers or on lunch and recess duty. Senate Bill 141 is headed to the full chamber after the Senate education committee voted unanimously in its favor on Wednesday. Sen. Jean Leising, R-Oldenburg, who authored the bill, said it's part of a push to combat Indiana's school counselor "crisis." "I do think it's an important bill because we have been putting off addressing the whole counselor issue ... this is a non-budget year, but this might be at least a way to give you some relief," Leising said. "The most important part for me is that our counselors are doing what we all thought counselors did — whether that's emotional counseling when kids have issues, or career counseling. ... I hope that this will entice and interest our schools into really looking at what our counselors are doing." The American School Counselor Association recently reported that Indiana has a student-to-counselor ratio of 694 to 1 — well above the national average and currently the highest in the country. As of 2023, schools employed just 1,494 counselors statewide for more than 1 million students. With the needs of Hoosiers students growing more demanding, Indiana school counselors say they're experiencing their own crisis. "We have a major problem in
 (Continued on Page 2)

California pummeled by first of back-to-back atmospheric rivers

By JOHN ANTCZAK
Associated Press
 LOS ANGELES (AP) — Heavy rain flooded California roadways and much-needed snow piled up in the mountains as the first of back-to-back atmospheric rivers pummeled the state Thursday. The storm focused its energy on the southern and eastern parts of the state after initially hitting the San Francisco Bay Area on Wednesday, where it halted cable car service. The downpours arrived Thursday in Southern California in time to snarl the morning commute. An atmospheric river, which is a long band of moisture that forms over the Pacific, was fueling the storms dousing the Los Angeles and San Diego areas, said National Weather Service forecaster Bob Oravec. Atmospheric rivers "typically occur ahead of cold fronts across the Pacific," he said. "And when they interact with the West Coast topography, you often get some very heavy rain both along the coastal ranges and also inland through the Sierras." As sheets of rain fell in San Diego, Ruben Gomez cleaned debris from storm drains in his parents' neighborhood Thursday. He piled sandbags around what was left of their home, which was hit hard by flooding from an earlier deluge. Firefighters had to rescue his parents, both 82, from the home after the earlier storm, which filled with water reaching six feet high. His father was hospitalized for two days because of hypothermia and his mother for a week after she got water in one of her lungs. "Every hole in the house, I've got plugged with plastic and paper
 (Continued on Page 2)

U.S. hints large response to Iran-backed militias is imminent

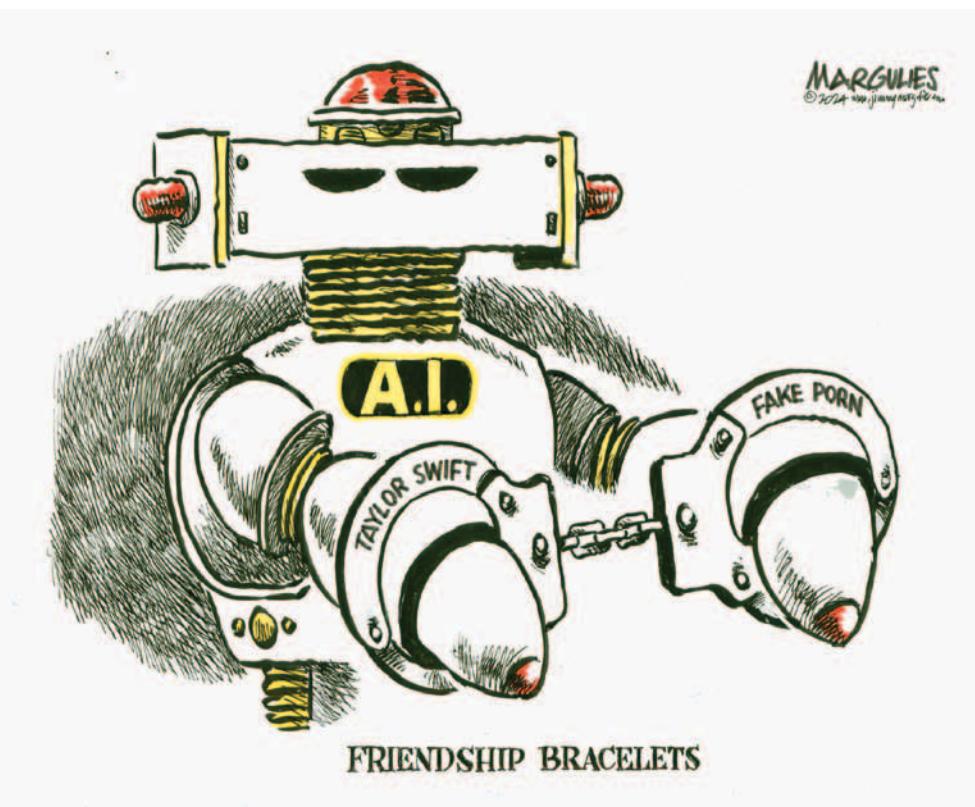
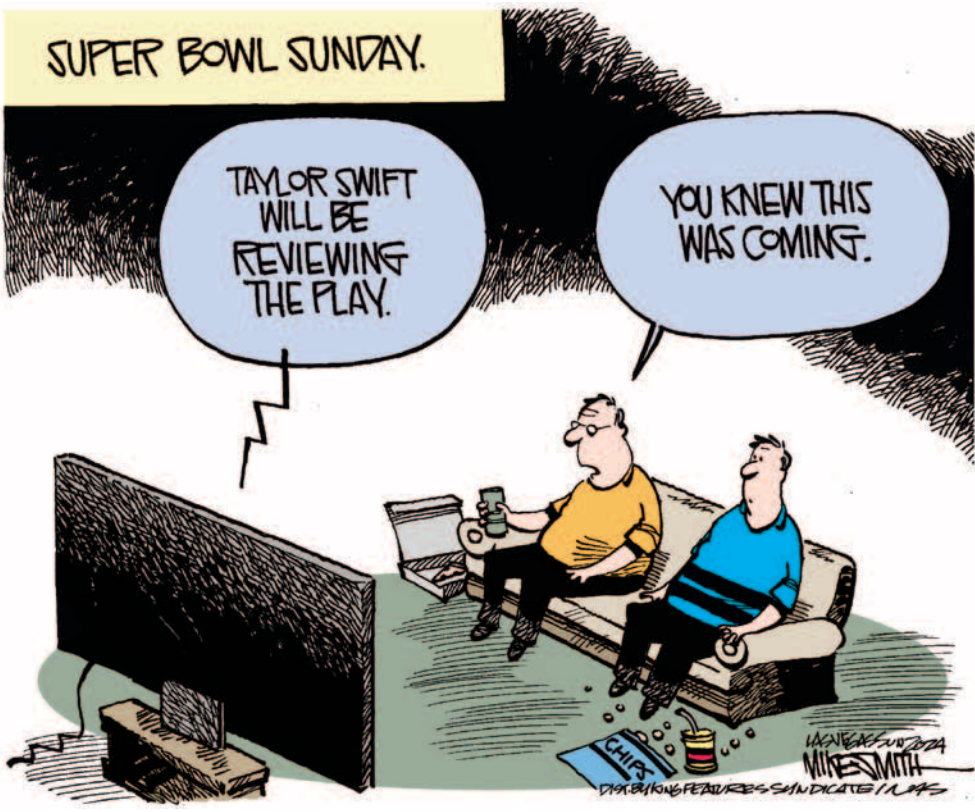
By TARA COPP, LOLITA C. BALDOR and JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press
 WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Thursday it's time to further disable Iran-backed militias that have struck at U.S. forces and ships in the Middle East and the U.S. is preparing to take significant action in response to the deaths of three U.S. service members in Jordan. For days the U.S. has hinted strikes are imminent. While the threat of retaliation for Sunday's deaths has driven some militant groups to say they were stopping hostilities, as late as Thursday Yemen's Houthi rebels were still attacking vessels and fired a ballistic missile at a Liberian-flagged container ship in the Red Sea. "At this point, it's time to take away even more capability than we've taken in the past," Austin said Thursday in his first press conference since he was hospitalized on Jan. 1 due to complications from prostate cancer treatment. Previous U.S. strikes have not deterred the attacks. Since the war between Israel and Hamas broke out in October, Iranian-backed militant groups have struck U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria at least 166 times with rockets, missiles and one-way attack drones, drawing about a half-dozen U.S. counterstrikes on militant facilities in both countries. The U.S. military also has carried out airstrikes targeting the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen. The U.S. has attributed the attack on Tower 22 in Jordan to the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group of Iran-backed militias that includes the militant group Kataib Hezbollah.
 (Continued on Page 2)

Senate headed for test vote on border policies, Ukraine aid

By STEPHEN GROVES, MARY CLARE JALONICK and LISA MASCARO
Associated Press
 WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate will hold a crucial test vote next week on legislation that would pair new policies at the southern border with wartime aid for Ukraine and other American allies, leaders pressing ahead despite heavy skepticism from Republicans and some Democrats. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said he will set in motion a test vote on the national security package for Wednesday. However, with some Republicans resisting the timeline and many remaining uncommitted to supporting the border policy changes, the bill's future remained uncertain. "Our southern border is in urgent need, in urgent need, of fixing," Schumer said in a floor speech. Senate negotiators are expected in the coming days to release the text of a bill that would overhaul the U.S. asylum system with tougher and quicker enforcement as well as send tens of billions of dollars in military assistance to Ukraine, Israel and other allies in Asia. Negotiators, toiling for weeks to finish the deal, have kept the bill's details a closely guarded secret, but have come under heavy pressure from Republicans who are both frustrated they have not seen the bill's contents and are wary of making any compromise on border security. The Senate deal could be Presi-
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The Week That Was - a look back through cartoonists' eyes...



When fun is against the law

The city of Toronto is in the news for outlawing sled and toboggan riding on 45 of its hillsides.

According to the Toronto Star, the ban has sparked a robust debate about how far government should go to protect people from themselves while they're having fun.

To be sure, tragic accidents do happen when frolicking kids and adults hit the sled slopes.

In a case a few years back, a 5-year-old girl in Nebraska hit a tree while sledding and became paralyzed.

In another case, in Iowa, a man suffered a spinal cord injury after slamming into a sign.

The first case resulted in a \$2 million judgment and the second in a \$2.75 million judgment against municipal governments.

Few sledding accidents are that serious, thank God.

But Newsweek cites statistics that show that every year they send more than 20,000 kids to the hospital — 9 percent of whom suffered a brain injury.

I hit the sled slopes dozens of times every winter as a kid, but I was careful.

I avoided toboggans, for instance, because I had so little control over those things — a concern that may have saved my life the day six of my daredevil friends rode a wooden toboggan down a steep hill on a golf course.

They had to be going better than 30 miles per hour when they hit a three-foot-wide culvert at the bottom of the hill.

It was magnificent to see them flailing their arms and legs as they sailed through the air and also very funny — until each of them landed with a gigantic thud.

Their boots, gloves and scarves were scattered all over the snow. Nobody broke any bones, but they moaned the whole way home.

Being an individualist, I was always a Flexible Flyer sled guy because it offered me superior control as I lay on my belly and whipped around trees and other obstacles.

However, my friend Wes Walters wasn't so skilled. While speeding downhill on his belly, he tried to navigate between two large trees and broke both elbows.

It's easy to find fault with government busybodies, lawyers and nannies who eagerly ban sled riding and other recreational activities, such as skateboarding, to protect people from hurting themselves.

I understand why towns and municipalities might ban an activity that may cost them a sizable damage settlement.

At the same time, though, I lament the litigiousness and overprotectiveness that has become the hallmark of modern times — and decry governments that don't know when to stop butting into our private lives to tell us how to behave.

Did you know, for example, that the federal government has created "helpful tips" on how to survive winter weather?

"Stay off roads if at all possible," our government warns us. "If trapped in your car, then stay inside."

That's sound advice for winter, I guess.

They forgot to remind us to wear our wool mittens and earmuffs.

But I'm still grateful my tax dollars are paying some bureaucrat to determine that it's best that we stay inside a car that we are already trapped in.

In any event, the real problem with life is that living is risky — and having fun can be especially risky.

Take what precautions you can, but remember: Life goes by too fast, so avoid government bureaucrats and do something fun as often as you can.

But never get on a toboggan.

Tom Purcell is a Pittsburgh Tribune-Review humor columnist. tom@TomPurcell.com.



Tom Purcell

The Generational Divide

It is simply a fact of life that each generation rebels against its predecessors. I will leave it to the psychologists or sociologists to explain why that is and why historically these generations tend to get the rebellion worked out of their system in early adulthood. Maybe it's the children and the mortgage that cause a reevaluation of the perfect over against the practical. Reality will win out.

I wonder, though, if that generalization is no longer holding true. Many of my age believe that the current generational fissures are unbridgeable chasms capable of overturning our traditional American cultural norms. It's nearly impossible to trust that things will work out for the better when all we hear is doom and gloom.

Can it be as bad as all that?

When in doubt about the truthfulness of a proposition, I look for people willing to discuss it with me. I choose friends with whom I have never talked about this particular issue before. I don't want to hear the same old, same old. The last place I want to find myself is in an echo chamber.

So I sought out friends from different generations from each other's and from mine, in this case what are known as generations X and Y, the latter better known as the Millennials. The sample size for each generation was exactly one, hardly meeting even the most lackadaisical scientific standards but still not meaningless for my purposes.

One friend is of my children's generation, Generation X if I understand the taxonomy correctly. He grew up in west central Indiana in a small city but now lives in Fort Wayne. He told me what he misses most are front porches and sidewalks. These two things represent to him the neighborliness of his childhood. It was a comfortable and secure space for him.

As we talked, it occurred to me that he was describing the same kind of neighborhood I remembered from my childhood. And I am a Baby Boomer so we are crossing a generational divide that perhaps no longer exists. As I think back to the kind of home life my kids had, living in a suburban housing subdivision, it was similar to my own from way back in the Jurassic 1950's.

If I am honest with myself, I must admit that this younger friend may be wearing the same rose-colored glasses that I do. Regardless, it is instructive that he sees a utopian childhood that is lost yet still one that he wants



Mark Franke

for his children. I should be able to field test his opinion with my own married children. They read these columns occasionally so I'm sure I will hear from them if I am off base.

The second interviewee, if I can call him that, was eager to talk about these things. He is a Millennial, a young father with substantial contact with the next generation. I believe these kids are called Generation Z, now moving through high school and college and into adulthood.

His observation is that the Generation Z young people are reacting against the cultural and political excesses of the Millennials and their fellow travelers in the cultural wars. He senses that this reaction is becoming more virulent as they rebel against the nihilistic philosophy of their older siblings. His insight reminded me of the pendulum on our grandfather clock, moving relentlessly from one extreme of its path to the other. At least that analogy is better than that of Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum" and its impending doom.

Now the above statements are all generalizations, and all generalizations are false including this one as Mark Twain quipped. Remember, though, that generalizations are not meant to be immutable natural laws but simply observations about what is most often true. Absolute certainty is hard to come by; we all have learned to live our lives using our best judgment of what we see and hear and then drawing the optimal conclusion. "You can observe a lot just by watching," as my favorite twentieth century philosopher Yogi Berra instructed us.

So I will take my two friends' observations to heart and operate on their validity, if and until I see adequate evidence to the contrary. Both of my friends are serious students of the human condition, well read and disciplined thinkers, so I don't expect to be disabused of my trust in their perspectives.

Since I tend toward the optimistic side of the optimism/pessimism continuum, I prefer to find reasons for hope rather than despair. I pray my Millennial friend is right in his prediction about the pendulum, but the curmudgeon in me would like to figure out how to stop the pendulum at that sweet spot my Generation X friend wants to relive for the benefit of his children and my grandchildren.

Mark Franke, M.B.A., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review and its book reviewer, is formerly an associate vice-chancellor at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne.

Hoosier Opinions

Today in History

By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Feb. 2, the 33rd day of 2024. There are 333 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 2, 2013, former Navy SEAL and "American Sniper" author Chris Kyle was fatally shot along with a friend, Chad Littlefield, at a gun range west of Glen Rose, Texas; suspect Eddie Ray Routh was later convicted and sentenced to life in prison without

parole.

On this date:

In 1536, present-day Buenos Aires, Argentina, was founded by Pedro de Mendoza of Spain.

In 1653, New Amsterdam — now New York City — was incorporated.

In 1887, Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, held its first Groundhog Day festival.

In 1913, New York's rebuilt Grand Central Terminal officially opened to the public at one minute past midnight.

In 1914, Charles Chaplin made his movie debut as the comedy short "Making a Living" was released by Keystone Film Co.

In 1925, the legendary Alaska Serum Run ended as the last of a series of dog mushers brought a life-saving treatment to Nome, the scene of a diphtheria epidemic, six days after the drug left Nenana.

In 1943, the remainder of Nazi forces from the Battle of Stalingrad surrendered in a major victory for

the Soviets in World War II.

In 1948, President Harry S. Truman sent a 10-point civil rights program to Congress, where the proposals ran into fierce opposition from Southern lawmakers.

In 1980, NBC News reported the FBI had conducted a sting operation targeting members of Congress using phony Arab businessmen in what became known as "Abscam," a codename protested by Arab Americans.

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

Staying healthy and saving time

Dear Annie: I'm knee-deep in a demanding job, and I absolutely love it. The problem is, I can tell my health is slipping...

phone records and got more mad because there were up to 15 texts in one day, but the phone records do not show the actual texts.



Dear Annie by Annie Lane

Dear Healthy Hacks: If you don't take care of yourself, you'll burn out, and your body won't let you continue doing that demanding job you love so much.

There are a few ways to stay healthy without sacrificing convenience: Take some time every weekend to meal prep your food for the week.

- Go on walks. Even if you don't have time for a full hour in the gym, squeezing in a couple of 10-minute walks per day can make a huge difference. Prioritize sleep.

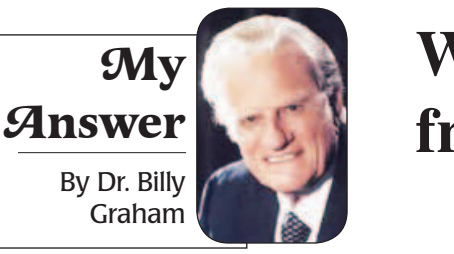
Dear Betrayed: It sounds like your husband has been pretty receptive since you voiced your concerns and this co-worker is the one who still doesn't get the message...

The fact that you had a hunch to check your husband's phone now for the first time in your marriage, though, signifies to me there may be cracks in your foundation that need attention.

"How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation...

Good luck! Dear Annie: Recently, my husband's phone was sitting on the table, and even though I had never gone through it before, I did this time.

I called him on it. I looked at the phone records and got more mad because there were up to 15 texts in one day...



We draw comfort from the fact that God is at work

Question: Are Christians responsible for their decisions in life or is God in complete control and things happen just the way He intends for them to play out?

The Bible teaches both God's sovereignty and our human responsibility. To us, this sounds like a contradiction...

Answer: Theologians have debated for centuries about God's absolute control over everything versus mankind's freedom to act on their own.

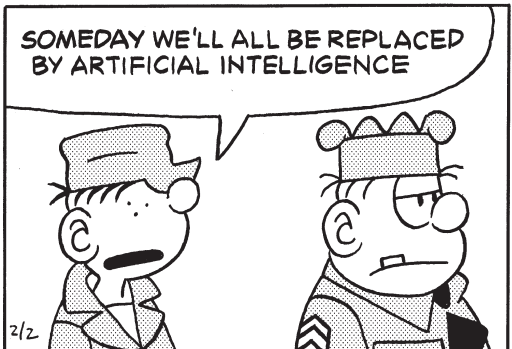
Why is this important? The Apostle Paul stresses that God is working behind the scenes to accomplish His purposes.

The question people long to have answered is whether everything that happens to us is already determined by God.

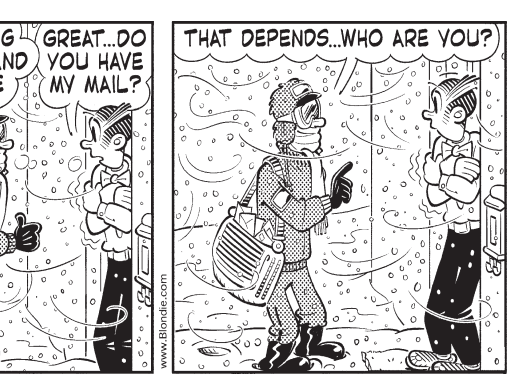
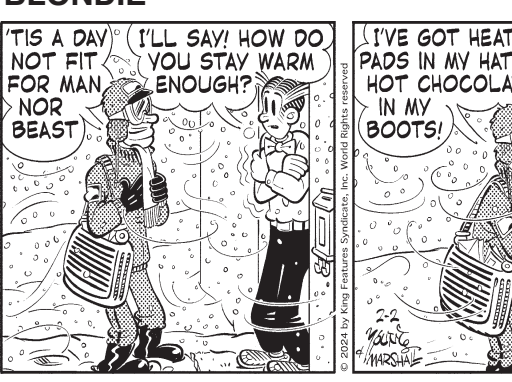
work — even if we can't fully understand it now. We must also realize that we are responsible for decisions we make.

TV schedule grid with columns for time slots (5 PM to 12:30) and rows for various channels (WIMM, CBS, Antenna, ABC, etc.)

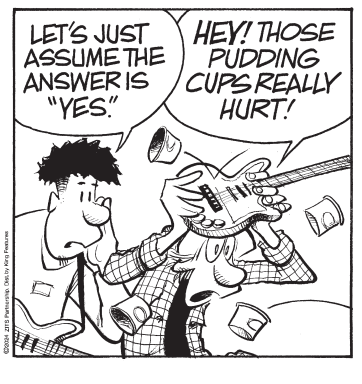
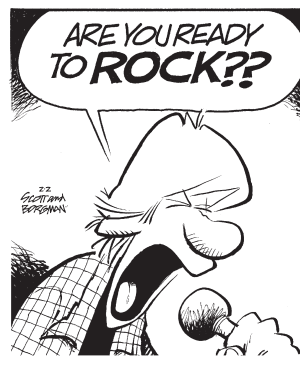
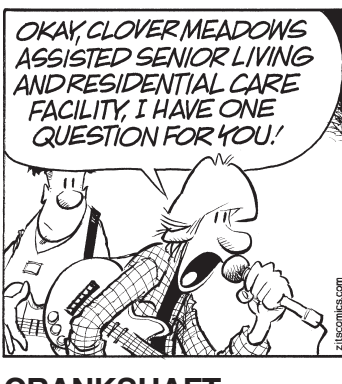
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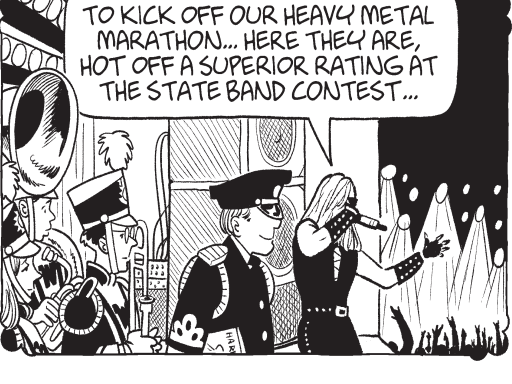
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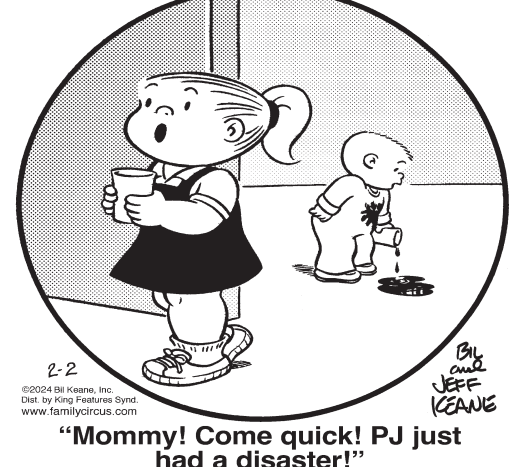
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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with ACROSS and DOWN clues, and a solution time of 25 mins.

Grid for yesterday's crossword puzzle answer, with numbers 1-58 indicating starting positions.

Biden sanctions Israeli settlers accused of attacking Palestinians

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Thursday issued an executive order that targets Israeli settlers in the West Bank who have been accused of attacking Palestinians and Israeli peace activists in the occupied territory, imposing financial sanctions and visa bans in an initial round against four individuals.

Those settlers were involved in acts of violence, as well as threats and attempts to destroy or seize Palestinian property, according to the order. The penalties aim to block the four from using the U.S. financial system and bar American citizens from dealing with them. U.S. officials said they were evaluating whether to punish others involved in attacks that have intensified during the Israel-Hamas war.

Biden's order is a rare step against America's closest ally in the Mideast who, Biden says, has the right to defend itself. But the Democratic president has pressed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to show greater restraint in its military operations aimed at rooting out Hamas. Netanyahu denounced the U.S. penalties, which his government was notified in advance, U.S. officials said.

Palestinian authorities say some Palestinians have been killed, and rights groups say settlers have torched cars and attacked several small Bedouin communities, forcing evacuations.

"This violence poses a grave threat to peace, security, and stability in the West Bank, Israel, and the Middle East region, and threatens the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in a statement.

Biden is facing growing criticism for his administration's strong support of Israel as casualties mount in the conflict, which began when Hamas, the militant group that rules Gaza, attacked Israel on Oct. 7.

The order notes that the violence by settlers undermines U.S. foreign policy objectives, "including the viability of a two-state solution and ensuring Israelis and Palestinians can attain equal measures of security, prosperity, and freedom."

Biden has reinvigorated calls for an independent Palestinian state that would exist alongside Israel, a goal that has eluded American presidents and Middle East diplomats for decades. Biden has said that finding a way to achieve Palestinian sovereignty once the Israel-Hamas war ends is essential to building a durable peace.

Netanyahu has rejected such an idea throughout his political career and has told U.S. officials he remains opposed to any postwar plan that includes establishment of a Palestinian state.

The Israeli leader quickly denounced the sanctions. "The vast majority of settlers," he said in a statement, "are law-abiding citizens, many of them these days are fighting as conscripts and reservists for the defense of Israel."

The State Department, in a statement, identified the four settlers and described the accusations against them:

—David Chai Chasday allegedly led a riot in Huwara in which a Palestinian civilian was killed.

—Einan Tanjil is accused of assaulting Palestinian farmers and Israeli activists.

—Shalom Zicherman was reportedly filmed assaulting Israeli activists in the West Bank.

—Yinon Levi regularly led a group of settlers from the Meitarim Farm outpost who assaulted Palestinian and Bedouin civilians and threatened them with more violence if they did not leave their homes.

Biden has spoken out against retaliatory attacks by Israeli settlers and pledged that those those responsible for the violence will be held accountable. He said in late October that the violence by "extremist settlers" amounted to "pouring gasoline" on the already burning fires in the Middle East. "It has to stop. They have to be held accountable. It has to stop now," Biden said.

Israel Defense Forces stepped up raids across the West Bank after the war began. Hamas militants are present in the West Bank, but largely operate underground because of Israel's tight grip on the territory. Palestinians have accused the Israeli military of not preventing attacks by settlers.

Tearful relatives of Maine mass shooting victims plead for change to prevent future tragedies

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP) — Tearfully relaying scenes of blood, chaos and panic, family members of the victims of Maine's deadliest shooting described their unfathomable losses on Thursday as they implored an independent commission to make sure others never have to experience the same thing.

One by one, relatives of some of the 18 people killed by an Army reservist described their heartbreak, with several expressing frustration that neither law enforcement nor the military intervened to take weapons from the shooter despite his deteriorating mental health.

"The system failed, and we can't allow this to happen again," said Kathleen Walker, whose husband, Jason, was killed while rushing at the gunman to try to stop him.

Along with Walker, speakers included Stacy Cyr, whose partner Michael Deslauriers also died charging at the gunman; Elizabeth Seal, who is caring for four children after the death of her husband, Joshua; and Megan Vozzella, whose husband, Steve, died two weeks shy of their one-year wedding anniversary. Deslauriers and Jason Walker were childhood friends.

Also testifying were members of the tightknit deaf community in Lewiston, which lost four people in the Oct. 25 shooting at a bowling alley and at a bar, which was hosting a deaf cornhole league. In addition to the deaths, 13 people were injured.

Witnesses said the flow of information to the deaf community was stymied by a lack of American Sign Language interpreters at the crime scene, in hospitals and at a location where relatives gathered. They also said translations of the earliest public briefings were spotty.

"We need to do something about this," said Seal, who is deaf and whose husband was an ASL interpreter and advocate.

Daniel Wathen, former chief justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court and

chair of the independent commission, said he agreed with Seal. "The word access has taken on new meaning both for me and the entire state of Maine," Wathen said.

The commission was established by Democratic Gov. Janet Mills and state Attorney General Aaron Frey to review events leading up to the shootings and make factual findings that can inform policy changes to prevent similar tragedies from happening again.

The gunman, Robert Card, 40, was experiencing a mental health breakdown before the shooting, and police and the Army were aware of his deteriorating mental health.

His son and ex-wife told police in May that Card was becoming paranoid and hearing voices, and a fellow reservist explicitly warned in September that he was going to commit a mass killing. In between, Card was hospitalized for two weeks for erratic behavior while his Maine-based Army Reserve unit was training in West Point, New York.

More than a month before the shootings, police went to Card's home for a face-to-face assessment required under the state's yellow flag law, which allows a judge to order the removal of guns from someone who is experiencing a psychiatric emergency. But Card refused to answer the door, and police said they couldn't legally force the issue.

Tens of thousands of residents in Lewiston and neighboring communities were under a lockdown order after the shootings. Card's body was found two days later. The medical examiner ruled that he died by suicide.

"This could have and should have been prevented," Cyr told the panel. "Warning signs were ignored."

Democratic Gov. Janet Mills made the shootings the focus of her annual State of the State address, using her speech to propose background checks for some private gun sales, expanded mental health treatment and a change to the yellow flag law.

Federal judge dismisses case seeking to force U.S. to pressure Israel to stop bombing Gaza

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — A U.S. district judge in California dismissed a lawsuit Wednesday that sought to force the Biden administration to do all it could to make Israel stop bombing Gaza.

U.S. District Judge Jeffrey White said he didn't have jurisdiction over the matter, but he still offered harsh criticism of the administration and said Israel's actions may amount to genocide.

White heard testimony last Friday in federal court in Oakland in the unusual lawsuit filed in November on behalf of Palestinian human rights organizations and people whose family members are among the more than 26,000 people killed by Israeli forces following the Oct. 7 assault by the militant group Hamas.

The complaint sought an order requiring that President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin "adhere to their duty to prevent, and not further, the unfolding genocide of Palestinian people in Gaza."

White declined to issue a preliminary injunction and dismissed the case. But he was critical of the administration, writing, "There are rare cases in which the preferred outcome is inaccessible to the Court. This is one of those cases."

He conceded the plaintiffs' point that "it is plausible that Israel's conduct amounts to genocide," and he implored the White House "to examine the results of their unflagging support of the military siege against the Palestinians in Gaza."

The lawsuit asked the court to declare that the defendants have violated their

duties to prevent genocide and to not be complicit in the commission of genocide. It sought immediate relief, including ordering the president and other U.S. officials to exert their influence over Israel to stop its bombing and to lift the siege in Gaza and to stop providing or facilitating the sales of weapons and arms to Israel.

It also asked the court to order defendants to stop obstructing attempts by the international community to call for a cease-fire in Gaza. The United States vetoed in December a United Nations resolution calling for an immediate humanitarian cease-fire.

Plaintiffs included Defence for Children International, based in Ramallah, West Bank, and Palestinians in Gaza and in the U.S., including Waeil Elbhassi, a U.S. citizen of Palestinian origin who lives in San Ramon, about 30 miles from Oakland.

Last week's hearing came the same day as the top court of the United Nations rebuked Israel's wartime conduct and ordered its government to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide but stopped short of ordering an end to the military offensive.

The political branches of the U.S. government have wide authority over foreign policy, as the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled when the family of U.S. college student Rachel Corrie tried to sue U.S. bulldozer maker Caterpillar of aiding Israel in war crimes. Corrie was run over and killed in 2003 while trying to stop the demolition of a house in Gaza.

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