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## County nears agreement regarding health officer

**By HOLLY GASKILL**  
A resolution may be on its way for the ongoing matter of the removal of Wells County's health officer.

During their regular meeting Tuesday, County Attorney Ted Storer requested the County Commissioners approve a motion as the parties are "close to a reso-

lution." The motion, approved unanimously, allows Commissioner President Jeff Stringer to "develop a settlement package relative to those issues" with Storer and "approve and execute any documents (Stringer) deems necessary," as Storer proposed. The commissioners also permitted Auditor Lisa McCormick to attest

to Stringer signing any documents. "The county and the Board of Health have been working diligently to attempt to resolve the issues in an amicable and fair manner, and we may be close to a resolution on that dispute, which will require the preparation and execution of some documents to effectuate whatever resolution we

may have," Storer said during the meeting. A public hearing on the matter was held on Jan. 10, where several Health Board members expressed frustration at what they believed to be a lack of leadership from Health Officer Dr. Kay Johnson during the Wells County Health Department's understaffing and employee turnover last year. Johnson and her legal counsel claimed that these grievances were not communicated prior to the board's unanimous Dec. 6 decision to initiate the process for her removal. She has held the position since 2010 and was elected to another four-year term in 2022.

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Friends book sale

Friends of the Library will be hosting a used book sale this week at the Wells County Public Library's Bluffton location during regular hours Wednesday through Saturday. In addition to children's books, fiction and non-fiction books there will be jig saw puzzles, wooden children's puzzles, magazines and movies offered in the sale. Pictured left to right are Lowell Tillman, Missi Clark, Leslie Tillman, Alan Daugherty, Barbara Oswald, Dave Oswald and Audrey Almdale. (Photo by Barbara Barbieri)

## Wells Commissioners withhold final payment for jail renovation

**By HOLLY GASKILL**  
Over a year has passed since the Wells County Jail renovation project was set to wrap up. Since then, several final items have remained unfinished, and the final portion of the project unpaid. Several months ago, however, Sheriff Scott Holliday reported that Ameresco, the group in charge of the project, wanted to close out billing. A representative attended Monday's County Commissioner meeting seeking the same thing. Brad Driver, senior project developer, claimed the county was notified of substantial completion in October, and the group intended to finish the final items but could not do so immediately. Driver explained that in issues regulating HVAC, for example, the contractor would have to come out in the

summer to ensure accuracy. He subsequently asked the county to close out billing with a written promise to complete the final items. He estimated the final bill to be just over \$138,000. "This has been over a year since we were supposed to be complete, so I'm reluctant to pay any of that until we're just done," Commissioner Jeff Stringer said. "My gut feel since I started with this with Ameresco (is) it's been difficult at best, in my eyes. And I think you ought to be done to get your last payment — that's the only way, I feel, we can motivate you to have it finished the way it needs to be finished is to hold that last payment." Driver then asked if the county would consider holding back 10%

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## Ossian Parks Department tackles ball diamonds and summer concert series

**By SYDNEY KENT**  
The Ossian Parks Department met for the first time this year Monday night. Jeff Osborn was appointed as the president of the board, with Jay Esparza voted as vice president. Michael Dodge was appointed as board secretary; all votes were unanimous. In an update for old business, the board discussed reconfiguring the ball diamonds in town. Dodge advised there was potential funding with grants available to assist with the infrastructure for the diamonds. Though the funding couldn't be used for the diamond itself, it could be allocated for purposes such as parking for the field. In an update for old business, the board discussed reconfiguring the ball diamonds in town. Dodge advised there was potential funding with grants available to assist with the infrastructure for the diamonds. Though the funding couldn't be used for the diamond itself, it could be allocated for purposes such as parking for the field. In an update for old business, the board discussed reconfiguring the ball diamonds in town. Dodge advised there was potential funding with grants available to assist with the infrastructure for the diamonds. Though the funding couldn't be used for the diamond itself, it could be allocated for purposes such as parking for the field.

people on either side may take issue with additional traffic in the area. Osborn pointed out that larger events can often frustrate attendees as parking is not available. He suggested the board seek a solution to the issue of parking that would be an alternative to the project, such as a sign redirecting people. The board questioned where the funds for the sign would come from and estimated the cost to be between \$500-\$1,000. Crystal Chapman, Ossian town manager, explained that not much money is allocated for the parks department outside of salary. Michael suggested the Ossian Revitalization Committee could potentially assist with the funds. The board will continue the conversation at a later date. Planning for the summer concert series is in full swing, with more than half of the dates booked already. The board also accepted a \$1,500 grant to be designated for

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## Here's how Indiana schools are tackling library book complaints

A new law took effect in January, but school officials have been dealing with book challenges for years

**By CASEY SMITH and ARNOLT CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM STAFF**  
**Indiana Capital Chronicle**  
"Garbage in, garbage out." That's what a Rome City resident thought of Sherman Alexie's "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian." The complaint filed with the East Noble School Corporation told administrators the book didn't belong on library shelves but in the trash can. "The material is persistently racist, encourages 'white guilt', contains many unhealthy over-generalizations, glorifies masturbation, uses offensive gay slurs,

uses the word n\*gger [sic], is repeatedly sexual — including attraction to school staff, portrays Christianity in a negative light, openly mocks Jesus Christ, and thanks God for self-gratification," the May 2023 complaint read. But East Noble's school board disagreed and denied the request and subsequent appeal to keep the award-winning book in the curriculum. Public records from East Noble did not say why the board opted to keep Alexie's book. In Indiana, it's rare for school districts to ban books from libraries and classrooms. Since 2020, at least six dis-

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## Blinken returns to Mideast in push for hostage deal, post-war Gaza plan

**By MATTHEW LEE, WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY**  
**Associated Press**  
RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Saudi Arabia's crown prince Monday at the start of his fifth visit to the Middle East since the outbreak of the war in Gaza, hoping to press ahead with a potential cease-fire deal and post-

war planning while tamping down regional tensions. But on all three fronts he faces major challenges: Hamas and Israel are publicly at odds over key elements of a potential truce. Israel has dismissed U.S. calls for a path to a Palestinian state, and Iran's militant allies in the region have shown little sign of being deterred by U.S. strikes. In Gaza, meanwhile, Hamas

has begun to re-emerge in some of the most devastated areas after Israeli forces pulled back, an indication that Israel's central goal of crushing the group remains elusive. Video footage from the same areas shows vast destruction, with nearly every building damaged or destroyed. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said the military would continue to conduct operations in

northern Gaza for many months and press ahead with its main offensive in the south, where it has been locked in heavy fighting for weeks, until it has "full reign" over the entire territory. He said the offensive will eventually reach the town of Rafah, on the Egyptian border, where some 1.5 million displaced Palestinians have sought refuge. Egypt has said an Israeli deployment along the

border would threaten the peace treaty the two countries signed over four decades ago. Blinken met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman shortly after arriving in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. Saudi officials have said the kingdom is still interested in normalizing relations with Israel in a potentially historic deal, but only if there is a credible plan to create

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Early morning fog, breezy today and tonight  
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# Health officer agreement

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The Health Board met in an executive session on Jan. 24 and eventually tabled the conversation in the special session immediately following.

Storer declined to further explain the nature of this possible agreement, not limited to whether Johnson would resign from or remain at the Health Department. He also declined to comment on when or if information regarding the agreement

would be public, given the motion allowed Stringer to take executive action outside of a public meeting. “We don’t know what that would be, so I can’t comment on what an agreement might or might not

entail,” Storer told The News-Banner. The next regular meeting of the Health Board is 6:30 a.m. Feb. 15., and the commissioner’s next meeting is 5 p.m. Feb. 20.

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# Jail renovation

(Continued from Page 1)  
of the final payment as retention, and Stringer said he believed the final payment acted as retention. “I think (10%) isn’t enough to motivate them to get it done,” Stringer replied.

After a brief sidebar with County Attorney Ted Storer, Mike Vanover stated he believed the county was unable to close billing before the project’s total completion.

Storer added, “The pay application that I’m looking at, it says retainage is not applicable ... So from a standpoint of my role to the commissioners, I can’t provide advice to them to execute and approve this until we have more information.”

Holliday credited Ameresco in that it was difficult to get the subcontractors to return after they’ve moved on

to new projects. Driver reported that Ameresco’s subcontractors are already paid in full.

Commissioner Blake Gerber said he would consider the county keeping a more significant part of the final payment — around \$75,000. Driver was receptive to this and suggested he return at the commissioners’ March 4 meeting with further discussion.

Holliday also presented quotes regarding a repair to sewer lines in the administrative portion of the jail, unrelated to the Ameresco renovation project. Holliday stated he had had the area inspected following longstanding issues with an occasional sewer odor and found several cracking pipes.

The trick, however, is the placement of the pipes. Holliday advised the lines are located behind a narrow false wall

between the restrooms, requiring the removal of the whole wall.

The first quote for the total work came in at approximately \$22,000, but the commissioners approved a second set of quotes, \$9,500 for the pipework and \$2,400 for the masonry. Holliday will file for an additional appropriation through the Wells County Council for the project.

“It’s something that needs to be taken care of, for sure,” Holliday concluded.

As of Monday, Holliday reported 83 inmates in the Wells County Jail. Of this total, 39 were pre-trial holds for the Wells County Circuit Court, 28 pre-trial holds for the Superior Court, 14 from the Department of Correction and two Level 6 felons.

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# Ossian Parks Department

(Continued from Page 1)  
events. They discussed possible fundraising tactics and tiers for people to donate as fundraising will be needed.

Potential dates and bands for the concerts were also discussed.

The board approved a

motion to allow Horizon Events to continue to provide concessions at the concerts and collect the funds. The proceeds from the concessions are used to support free local events in Ossian. Additional options for concessions were also

discussed, with the potential to sign on with new food trucks or local businesses.

The board also discussed respective roles and responsibilities related to the maintenance of each of the parks in the town. Each member

has a park assigned to them to regularly check in and report back on any needed updates.

The next regularly scheduled Ossian Park Board meeting is at 7 p.m. on March 4 at Collier’s.

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# Library book complaints

(Continued from Page 1)  
tracts banned books, two moved books to other libraries and 17 received complaints, according to an investigation by the Arnolt Center for Investigative Journalism and the Indiana Capital Chronicle.

But a new law — House Enrolled Act 1447 — opens the door to more public scrutiny of school library catalogs and has districts anticipating more challenges to what books students can read.

“I’ve heard from some parents locally that there has been some reviews and that there is some frustration with the processes some schools have created,” said Rep. Martin Carbaugh, R-Fort Wayne, who authored the legislation. “The end goal is transparency for parents and ensuring kids aren’t exposed to materials that aren’t age appropriate.”

Republican Sen. Jim Tomes, of Wadesville — who has tried to pass some version of the new law for years — authored the initial bill that the language appeared in. He declined to comment for this story.

Much of the outrage has come from conservative groups like Moms for Liberty and the Indiana chapter of Purple for Parents. A few loud fights in key cities caused the issue seem like a statewide “crisis.”

The Arnolt Center and the Indiana Capital Chronicle contacted around 440 school districts and charter schools in Indiana — 249 responded to the requests and 191 are still processing the requests.

But advocates for schools and libraries contend the issue goes beyond claims about pornography in libraries or legal defenses available in state statute. More broadly, they say the issue stems from “fundamental differences” in values and opinions over what material is “appropriate” for Hoosier youth.

Effective Jan. 1, HEA 1447 requires Indiana school districts to establish procedures for responding to complaints about library material alleged to be “obscene” or “harmful to minors.” Districts must review requests at public meetings and hear appeals if necessary. Schools must also maintain public catalogs of library materials.

Beneath the surface of the school library discourse is contention from Hoosier parents who say their local school boards have rejected their challenges of certain materials, leaving books some deem to be “obscene” and “objectionable” accessible to kids in school libraries.

Still, obscene material is already illegal under Indiana code and federal law, and material harmful to minors is unlawful for people under 18 to access. Those terms have very specific definitions in state law — with a high bar to

meet. Outlawed materials must, as a whole, describe or represent, in any form, nudity, sexual conduct, sexual excitement, or sado-masochistic abuse, appeal to the prurient interest in sex of minors, be patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable matter for or performance before minors, or lack serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors.

Librarians and other opponents of the new law maintain such materials are not — and haven’t been — present in school libraries, given that librarians already have a duty to vet what’s appropriate.

Critics have said, too, the new law will have a “chilling effect,” particularly because school librarians found in violation could be charged with a felony.

Diane Rogers, a librarian at Ben Davis Ninth Grade Center in Indianapolis and president of the Indiana Library Federation, said for the most part, the law didn’t change much for school libraries. Many Hoosier districts already had public-facing catalogues, as well as processes in place for parents to request review of books and other educational materials.

Even so, she said “it wasn’t necessary to have this bill,” noting that a 1982 U.S. Supreme Court ruling affirmed school personnel have discretion over the content of their libraries, but can not remove books because they dislike the ideas contained in those titles.

“It’s been illegal to have those materials in libraries,” Rogers said. “Most of our decisions, we’re not really thinking in terms of obscenity because most of us were not even considering those books to begin with.”

“It seems to me that the bill has caused that chilling effect to happen already, which is what many of us were afraid of,” she continued. “By further specifying criminal charges and taking away defenses from teachers ... you’re putting fear into people.”

Superintendent Derek Arrowood, of the Hamilton Heights School Corporation in Arcadia, also objected to the General Assembly’s intervention.

“The legislature pulls the trigger on whatever they do,” said Arrowood. “We’d prefer it if they did nothing and left me alone [sic]. We’ve got this — it should be a local decision.”

**Districts take preemptive action in anticipation of complaints**

Even before the new law took effect on Jan. 1, school districts attempted to get ahead of potential challenges.

Jim White, Superintendent of Bremen Public Schools in Bremen, said in an interview that the local library within the district recently came under

fire on Facebook for circulating the book “Genderqueer,” and he worried that the anger would make its way into the schools.

“Not that we have that book, but the people start looking for anything to be unhappy about,” White said. “We were fortunate it didn’t make its way over.”

Lake Central School Corporation in Saint John and Adams Central Community Schools in Monroe reviewed lists of commonly banned books, including those from Purple for Parents and Moms for Liberty.

“I think by doing so, we did head off some of the controversy, situations other school corporations experienced,” said Adams Central Superintendent Joel Mahaffey.

Concord Community Schools in Dunlap reevaluated books subject to previous complaints and opted to require parental approval for students to check out some titles or moved books from the junior high to high school library.

Lake Central Superintendent Larry Veracco said many districts preemptively removed titles they thought would be harder to defend to be safe.

“We’re willing to fight but not when we know we’re gonna lose,” Veracco said.

The fear of challenges has administrators watching what books libraries are buying.

Arrowood, of Hamilton Heights, said the district is cautious when selecting new library materials because of political groups as well as the new law. District librarians were concerned enough that they met with the county prosecutor about the new law, he said.

“We just sat down with him and said, ‘Hey, listen, are you gonna start arresting my librarians if there’s a book in the library that somebody on one of those fringes thinks is horrible and awful?’” Arrowood said.

Rogers maintained, though, that school librarians are trained to follow best practices from the American Library Association and use multiple professional review sources — including Kirkus and Horn Book reviews and the School Library Journal — before adding titles to their collection.

“I don’t think the new law us necessarily going to cause more books to be found to be obscene, because I am of the opinion that we don’t have obscene materials on the shelf already,” she said. “A librarian is going to make a decision for what is appropriate to be in their collection. They have a certain age group of students — so you have books that don’t come anywhere near meeting the standard of obscenity, but perhaps you choose not to purchase that book, or you choose not to have that book in your collection because it’s for older students. But mature does not mean obscene.”

# Weather

**Tuesday, February 6, 2024**  
**(24-hour observations at 10:03 p.m. Monday)**  
**High: 36; Low: 27; Precipitation: None**  
**Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 2.7 feet at 9:45 p.m. Monday**

# Wells County forecast

**Today:** Patchy fog before 10 a.m. Otherwise, partly sunny, with a high near 46. East wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Tonight:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 27. East wind around 5 mph.

**Wednesday:** Partly sunny, with a high near 50. South wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Wednesday Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 38. South wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Thursday:** Partly sunny, with a high near 57. Breezy.

**Thursday Night:** Showers likely, mainly after 1 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 48. Breezy. Chance of precipitation is 60 percent.

**Friday:** A 40 percent chance of showers. Partly sunny, with a high near 58. Breezy.

**Friday Night:** A chance of showers and thunderstorms before 1 a.m., then a slight chance of showers. Partly cloudy, with a low around 41. Breezy. Chance of precipitation is 30 percent.

**Saturday:** Mostly sunny, with a high near 52.

**Saturday Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 35.

**Sunday:** A 20 percent chance of showers. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 44.

**Sunday Night:** A chance of showers. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 31.

**Monday:** A chance of rain and snow showers. Partly sunny, with a high near 40.

# Blinken

(Continued from Page 1)

a Palestinian state.

Blinken “underscored the importance of addressing humanitarian needs in Gaza and preventing further spread of the conflict,” and he and the crown prince discussed “the importance of building a more integrated and prosperous region,” the State Department said in a statement.

But any such grand bargain appears a long way off as the war still rages in Gaza, where 113 bodies were brought to hospitals in the last 24 hours alone, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory. Another 205 people were wounded, the agency said.

The fatalities bring the overall Palestinian death toll from nearly four months of war to 27,478. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says most of the dead have been women and children.

The war has leveled vast swaths of the tiny enclave, displaced 85 percent of its population of 2.3 million Palestinians and pushed a quarter of residents to starvation.

A video circulating online Monday showed masked gunmen leading a line of shirtless detainees past bombed-out buildings in northern Gaza, forcing them to shout out that they are thieves. The Associated Press was not able to independently confirm the incident, but it is consistent with AP reporting.

It was the latest sign that

Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since seizing power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007, is reasserting control in parts of the north. Residents say Hamas-led security forces, which numbered in the tens of thousands before the war, have begun to reappear in some areas where they focus on distributing civil salaries and cracking down on looters.

The Israeli military says it has launched targeted operations in northern Gaza over the last week to prevent Hamas from rebuilding its capabilities.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the war until Israel crushes Hamas’ military and governing abilities and wins the return of the 100-plus hostages still held by the militant group after the Oct. 7 cross-border raid that ignited the war.

Hamas and other militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the attack and abducted around 250. More than 100 captives, mostly women and children, were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November in exchange for the release of 240 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Meeting with troops on Monday, Netanyahu said Israel had defeated 18 of Hamas’ 24 battalions, without providing evidence. “We are on the way to absolute victory, and I want to tell you that we are committed to it and we will not give it up.”

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OBITUARIES

Danny Lee Hidy, 89

Danny Lee Hidy, 89, of Bluffton, died Feb. 3, 2024, at the Waters of Hartford City in Hartford City. Arrangements are pending at Walker & Glancy Funeral Home in Montpelier.

# State legislators vote to repeal Ukrainian driver's license law

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — One year after passing a law that allows Ukrainian immigrants on humanitarian parole to receive driver's licenses, Indiana lawmakers are trying to repeal it after a federal judge recently ruled that the law must extend to all parolees.

The bill that passed the House on Monday with bipartisan support would eliminate a statute that allowed people legally in the U.S. on a narrow parole definition to receive a driver's license, but only if they are from Ukraine. A group of Haitian immigrants living in Indiana under the same federal designation sued the state over the law, saying it was discriminatory and unconstitutional.

In mid-January, a federal judge issued a temporary injunction striking the Ukrainian provision of the law, allowing all immigrants on humanitarian parole to receive temporary licenses in the state.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana and the National Immigration Law Center are representing the Haitian immigrants in the ongoing lawsuit, which seeks to permanently undo the Ukrainian stipulation.

Gavin Rose, senior staff attorney with the ACLU of Indiana, told The Associated Press it's not clear how the suit would be affected if the bill, House Bill 1162, becomes law.

"It would obviously be extremely concerning if the legislature removed the ability of Ukrainians to obtain credentials simply because Indiana has been required to also extend these credentials to persons from countries such as Haiti, who, like Ukrainians, have been allowed to enter and work in the United States because of dire humanitarian crises in their own countries," Rose said in an email.

Republicans have said extending the privilege to all people on parole makes the state vulnerable to federal immigration classifications out of their control.

Rep. Jim Pressel, Republican author of the bill, told lawmakers Thursday that the lawsuit has made the situation a "mess" and took issue with the federal definition of parole that includes people from several countries. He said he wants a conversation in the Senate about how to secure the intent of last year's law.

Rep. Matt Lehman, Republican floor leader in the House, said allowing all people on parole to get a license opens the door to the "coveted status" to "dishonest" people.

"I just don't have faith in our immigration policy on a national level that that status is coveted," he told lawmakers Thursday. "I think that status is being granted to people that we would have problems with."

The bill passed 89-8 in the Republican-controlled state House without debate and now advances to the state Senate.

# Spartz announces she's filing for reelection

By WHITNEY DOWNARD, Indiana Capital Chronicle

U.S. GOP Rep. Victoria Spartz announced Monday she will file for reelection in the 5th Congressional District, a reversal from her position one year ago when she said she would be retiring from Congress. Previously, she said she wanted to spend more time with her family.

The decision leaves other Republicans who had been running in her absence — at least nine of them — in a lurch. And two so far say they are staying in the race.

Spartz acknowledged the flip-flop in a release, saying the state of today's politics prompted her to run again.

"Deciding where your duty lies — family, work, or country, is never an easy task. Earlier last year, I decided to take some time off from running for public office to recharge and spend more time in Indiana with my family," Spartz said. "However, looking where we are today, and urged by many of my constituents, I do not believe I would be able to deliver this Congress, with the current failed leadership in Washington, D.C., on the important issues for our nation that I have worked very hard on."

Spartz, a Ukrainian immigrant, has been vocal about her upbringing and how it informs her conservative political views.

"As someone who grew up under tyranny, I understand the significance of these challenging times for our Republic, and if my fellow Hoosiers and God decide, I will be honored to continue fighting for them. We must carry on the sacrifice of countless Americans for our liberties and keep the American dream alive for our children," Spartz concluded in her announcement.

But the decision from Spartz throws a wrench into the plans of Republican candidates who have spent the last year fundraising in hopes of succeeding her. Candidates reported millions in contributions in the year-end reports to the Federal Election Commission, much of it in the form of self-funding.

INCIDENTS

City:

Friday, 2:04 p.m., 100 block of North Johnson Street. Assistance given in a property retrieval.

Friday, 3:23 p.m., Steffen Oil. A report of juvenile problem acting erratically in the back of a vehicle.

Friday, 3:36 p.m., 600 block of East Spring Street. Caller reported a missing juvenile, located two hours later.

Saturday, 12:38 a.m., Airplane Express & Service Station. Driver detained for testing.

Saturday, 11:36 a.m., North Main Street and East Ind. 124. Report of a male subject visibly drunk walking alongside the road.

Saturday, 3:05 p.m., Riverstone Dental. Report of two men trespassing on the property and going through the dumpster, unable to locate.

Saturday, 7:18 p.m., 600 block of Beth Avenue. Officer spoke with juvenile about controlling anger.

Saturday, 7:30 p.m., Bluffton Police/Fire Department. Report of multiple scam calls harassing the caller. Officer assisted in blocking phone number.

Saturday, 7:43 p.m., 400 block of Eastmoor Drive. Report of a small unclothed toddler running down the road. Caller advised mother came out and collected the child, and an officer cleared the situation with the mother.

Saturday, 8:45 p.m., 400 block of South Merchant Street. A 26-year-old male reported feeling like his "heart exploded." While on the line, the male advised he felt better and no longer needed medical attention — he said he had had a panic attack after getting sick from some Arby's food.

Sunday, 12:22 a.m., 200 block of Jersey Street. Caller reported a man was in their home. Officers found and spoke with the man, who was identified as a juvenile who had been knocking on the window. He was allowed to be there.

Sunday, 1:55 a.m., North Main Street and Capri Court. Vehicle did not stop for a traffic stop, reportedly traveling at over

100 mph. Vehicle continued for some time until nearing Ind. 218. Dispatch log describes one suspect being held at gunpoint and Blackford and Grant counties assisting with K9s. Three arrests made. Report to follow.

Sunday, 2:59 a.m., residence on Westgate Road. Woman requesting assistance in finding a place to stay.

Sunday, 11:16 a.m., 400 block of Cedar Road. Report of excessive noise. Advised to notify the landlord as well.

Sunday, 2:55 p.m., Christian Care Retirement Center. Woman reported her vehicle had been sideswiped while she was working.

Sunday, 3:39 p.m., Lakeside and Sunset drives. Report of a small dog on the loose, agitating the caller's dogs. Unable to locate.

Monday, 7:30 a.m., 1200 block of West Washington Street. Caller reported their vehicle had been hit in the back alley overnight.

Monday, 9:37 a.m., Bluffton Regional Medical Center. Vehicle backed into another.

Monday, 11:06 a.m., residence on Sunset Drive. Caller found a grocery cart in her back yard. She advised she would leave it out in front of her property.

Monday, 1:57 p.m., Comfort Inn. Welfare check on an individual who had not shown up for work and had been unable to make contact. Individual was located.

County:

Friday, 3:00 p.m., Ind. 116 and East 150 North, Bluffton. Report of vehicle on side of road possibly jump started by other vehicle. Owner advised they would have it towed.

Friday, 7:52 p.m., 1500 West 900 North, Markle. Deer vs. car.

Friday, 10:47 p.m., West 1000 South and Jeff Road, Warren. Caller requested report after they hit a raccoon and broke the bumper on their vehicle.

Saturday, 8:16 a.m., South Main and East Washington streets. Officer escorted subject to Peyton's.

Saturday, 10:18 a.m., Ind. 1 and East 450 South,

# Police Notebook

Bluffton. Caller reported multiple young people possibly speeding. Vehicle had slowed by the time it hit city limits.

Saturday, 3:49 p.m., 4600 East 400 North, Craigville. Car vs. chicken. Driver requested report for damage to vehicle.

Sunday, 7:45 a.m., 700 Countryside Drive, Markle. Caller reported hearing suspicious sounds overnight and noticed an unlocked door. Officer found no issues, but advised to report anything suspicious.

Monday, 6:50 a.m., Ind. 116 and South 400 East, Bluffton. Car vs. deer. Vehicle towed due to disabling damage.

Ossian: Saturday, 3:23 p.m., 6000 block of North Main Street, Ossian. Caller reported subject dumped items in yard.

Saturday, 5:59 p.m., Ind. 1 and East 1100 North, Ossian. Automated report that an iPhone user was in a car crash. Officer found subject had left his phone on the top of his vehicle.

Sunday, 1:14 p.m., 1000 North 750 East, Ossian. Welfare check requested for subject, subject not at home.

Sunday, 1:36 p.m., 5400 North 450 East, Ossian. Report of damage to front yard via vehicle.

Monday, 2:09 a.m., Ind. 1 and Industrial Parkway, Ossian. Report of a slow moving semi. Driver advised he is over his hours and driving slowly to not violate restrictions.

ACCIDENTS

County: Thursday, Leslie Apple Berg, 45, Fort Wayne, reported an accident that had occurred earlier that day at Willowbrook Trail and Main Street, where a 2014 Chevrolet Equinox driven by Earl Richard Howell, 86, Bryant, had reportedly backed into her 2006 Toyota at a stop sign. Berg said she later noticed the damage on her vehicle.

Thursday, 3:40 p.m., Walmart. Pauline A. Haines, 81, Bluffton, was backing a 2012 Buick Enclave and did not see a 2016 Toyota Avalon driven by Justin M. Tom, 50, Bluffton, behind her vehicle. Damage did not

exceed \$5,000. Thursday, 3:55 p.m., Walmart. Daniel J. McFarren was pulling a 2002 GMC Sierra into a parking spot and improperly turned, striking an unattended 2014 Cadillac ATS. Damage did not exceed \$5,000.

Friday, 6:33 p.m., Ind. 116, 900 ft. east of Hampshire Court. A 2011 Chevrolet Impala driven by Elizabeth Bothast, 24, Uniondale, and a 2015 Chrysler Town and Country driven by Patrick D. Autry were stopped at a railroad crossing, when Bothast let up on the brake and stuck the other vehicle. Damage did not exceed \$5,000.

Monday, 8:23 a.m., Ind. 1 just north of Ind. 124. A 2002 Honda Civic driven by Kandice K. Baker, 42, Fort Wayne, struck a large piece of metal in the road, causing damage to the vehicle and rupturing the radiator. Damage did not exceed \$2,500.

ARRESTS

Juan Perez Quixan, 22, Bluffton, operating without obtaining a license, a Class C misdemeanor.

Bradley Robert Gardner, 19, Warren; interfering with law enforcement using a vehicle, a Level 6 felony, operating with a controlled substance in body and possession of paraphernalia, both Class C misdemeanors, and operating a vehicle while intoxicated — endangerment, a Class A misdemeanor. No bond set.

Tony Jo Worthington, 42, Berne; possession of methamphetamine, a Level 6 felony. No bond set.

Lesly Ramirez, 19, South Bend; resisting law enforcement, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,500.

Charlene Cassandra Perez, 18, South Bend; resisting law enforcement, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,500.

Terez Alastair Leonard Jr., 19, South Bend; resisting law enforcement, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,500.

Raphael Marquis McCall, 29, Fort Wayne; driving while suspended — prior suspension, a Class A misdemeanor, and operating without financial responsibility, a Class C misdemeanor.

# Indiana community mourns 6 siblings killed in house fire

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (AP) — Members of a northern Indiana community mourned and searched for answers Monday as they gathered for the funeral of six siblings killed in a house fire.

The Smith siblings — 11-year-old Angel, 10-year-old Demetris, 9-year-old Davida, 5-year-old Deontay, 4-year-old D'Angelo and 17-month-old Faith — died after a fire engulfed their South Bend home on Jan. 21. Six photographs of the children and six flower arrangements lined the stage for the funeral held at the Century Center convention space.

"We all want answers," Mayor James Mueller said during the service. "It's hard to even fathom how this could happen. Why could

this happen? How could this be prevented so it could never happen again?" Mueller asked.

"There's never going to be an answer that's adequate when you lose children, to have their lives cut far, far too short," the mayor said.

Fire officials said the siblings were trapped by flames on the second floor of the home in South Bend, a city of about 100,000 people located just south of the Michigan state line. Their father survived the blaze. He told firefighters that he tried to rescue the children but was forced back by heavy smoke and wind-driven flames.

The cause of the fire

remains under investigation. Community leader Lynn Coleman talked about the impact the "Smith6" have had on their community since their deaths.

"They've brought people together across this community — Black,

white, Hispanic, Asian, young, old, rich, poor," Coleman said at the funeral. "They've connected people that would've never talked with each other. They've caused people to come together to say, 'What can I do to help?'"

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Annual Meeting

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57th Annual Meeting

Please Join Us!

Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024 @ 6 P.M.

Wells County Community Center  
1240 4-H Park Road, Bluffton, IN 46714  
**Annual Business Meetings and Award Presentations**

Dinner will be provided by Corner Depot

To receive a complimentary ticket, please reserve by Feb. 9th

Featuring Dr. Fred Whitford

—Farming in Wells County in the Old Days

Fred Whitford, Professor of Clinical Engagement, Purdue University, will share an entertaining and informative program on the early history of agriculture in Wells County. Please join us in recognizing the contributions of thousands of individuals who have contributed their talents to the betterment of agriculture in rural Indiana.

Contact the SWCD or Purdue Extension Office for more information or to reserve tickets.  
EMAIL: lynne.huffman@in.nacdn.net | PHONE: 824-1930 ext. 3  
EMAIL: mcorle1@purdue.edu | PHONE: 824-6412

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## Putting off until tomorrow what I should have done today

Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.

That proverb has long been a part of our cultural vocabulary and is one that reminds us not to procrastinate.

In other words, it's best not to put off intentionally and habitually a job because we think it might be easier to do that task in the future.

I consider myself lucky, as procrastination has never been a problem for me. In fact, I'm wired more the opposite way.

Putting off a task that I know needs to be taken care of would cause me more stress. Instead of trying to delay doing the job, I'm more likely to plan ahead or dive in right away.

One of my roles at the high school where I teach, for example, is to help our students plan big events such as proms and semi-formals — annual celebrations that involve almost 1,000 students.

I tried a couple of weeks ago to put in an order for some catering we'll need for an event later this spring only to gently be told by the venue that I was reaching out a bit too early.

There is one task, however, that seems to bring out my procrastination side — a job that needs to be done about every six weeks.

It only takes about an hour to do this job, but it's always the one task I never look forward to every sixth Saturday of the year.

I used to do this job at home but stopped almost two years ago when the drenched golden canine in question somehow managed to escape from the bathroom and make a few laps around the house before I could catch him with a towel to dry him off after he had already shaken off most of the water.

Bathing our 4-year-old golden retriever Santiago is a task I never look forward to and one that I put off until the last day of the last week — and sometimes even a few days beyond.

Getting the 110-pound pooch into the car is a piece of cake, as he loves car rides more than I love not being a procrastinator. And getting him into the pet store we now go to so that we can use their facilities to bathe him instead of our bathtub is as easy as pie.

The first time we took him to the store in the summer of 2022 so we could bathe him there instead of at home, however, our sweet Santiago who has never met a stranger turned into a deadweight lion as he ceased to cooperate.

Trying to get an uncooperative golden retriever a few feet off the ground into the self-serve dog wash turned out to be more difficult than I thought.

We have been back about 10 times since that dreadful first visit, and each time Santiago cooperates a bit more. That first time, however, has made me dread each visit since and turned me into a procrastinator when it comes to bathing our dog.

This past weekend was supposed to be Santiago's trip to the spa (a.k.a. the self-serve dog wash). When we arrived Saturday, however, one of the two wash stations was broken and another pet owner was using the other.

"It might be 20 minutes or so," the employee told us.

It's about a 10-minute drive each way to the pet store from where we live. Waiting 20 minutes would have been the logical thing to do.

Instead, I looked at Jen and said let's just come back tomorrow.

We returned Sunday afternoon only to discover that the one functional self-serve dog wash was being used.

"It might be 20 minutes or so," another employee told us.

We should have just waited after making a second trip but you probably know where this story is going.

We put off until next weekend what we could have done Sunday.

It makes no sense. It will be another 10 minutes there and 10 minutes back Saturday, and we will have spent more time driving back and forth to the pet store than it actually takes to give Santiago a bath.

At the time, however, procrastinating sounded good. All was not lost, though.

Our car needed washed even more than our dog after January's nasty weather. The car wash just happened to be right across the street from the pet store.

At least something that was in need of a washing got it this weekend.

And you know where I'll be first thing Saturday morning.

jdpeeper2@hotmail.com

## Letter to the Editor

### No longer reading "Here's the Thing"

If you are like me, I no longer read "Here's the Thing." We have heard for a long time now how underpaid teachers are, yet we are given a column by ex-teachers talking about exotic vacations and using slave labor to make a cheap suit. Unlike most occupations, the teachers and their unions have pensions that allow them to retire early. Sometime take a trip through a teacher's parking lot and you will see that their vehicles are nicer compared to the vehicles in your company parking lot. News-Banner, do us a favor and stop running this column.

JOSH NELSON  
Bluffton

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## Haley is the last candle fending off darkness. And she's fired up.

Until Feb. 24, the geography of 2024's presidential politics will suggest a satisfying symmetry. The first state that voted for secession can put the nation on a path away from today's political vitriol — the worst since the 1850s. A South Carolinian who lives here, 27 miles from the Charleston harbor fort at which the Civil War's first shots were fired, is neither in a surrendering mood nor short of ammunition.

South Carolinian truculence threatened the nation's unity 163 years ago. Today, that trait has the state's former governor Nikki Haley, a self-described "street fighter in heels," spoiling for a fight. Almost the entire Republican elite, in Washington and in this state, is prostrate before Donald Trump, the supposed populist scourge of the "establishment." She is, however, approved by 76 percent of this state's voters. They remember that Haley earned the enmity of the state's political establishment by enforcing transparency: Before she did, only 8 percent of House and 1 percent of Senate decisions were by recorded votes.

This state's voters also might reasonably resent Trump's apparent belief that her continuing candidacy is an affront to his grandeur. And his impertinence that their primary election is a nullity, given his inevitability.

Calling herself a "happy warrior," looking inexplicably rested and exuding an exuberant pugnacity, she is wagering that Trump cannot keep his composure for four weeks. And that a majority of voters, already embarrassed and exhausted by Trump, will be more so if he has a testosterone spill when she relentlessly needles him about being afraid to debate someone with two X chromosomes.

President Biden's handlers cannot allow him out campaigning for nine months because they know what voters will see. Trump's operatives cannot know what he does not know: what he will say next. One of Haley's tasks is to trigger him.

In South Carolina, independents can vote in either party's primary. Many of them — especially independent suburban women, who are apt to be decisive in November — are weary of behavior from Trump that they would not tolerate from their children.

A British diplomat, one of Theodore Roosevelt's close friends, when asked to explain TR, said: You must understand that the president is about 6 years old. The ambassador was referring to TR's overflowing enthusiasm, energy and curiosity. Trump only has a 6-year-old's defects: lack of impulse

control, and a penchant for infantile insults — e.g., referring to Haley as "birdbrain."

Laughing at him might not be Haley's preferred mode of attack. Voters, however, are in no mood for policy speeches, such as the one she gave at the Hudson Institute in 2020 — a luminous defense of economic freedom against the statism, corporatism and protectionism that make Biden and Trump kindred spirits. For perhaps the first time in U.S. history, and certainly for the first time in modern polling, voters' concerns about immigration — Biden's chaos at the border — eclipses all other issues, including the economy.

This fact. And Trump's weirdness. (Between his inauguration and his expulsion from the platform, he tweeted 26,237 times — about 18 times a day). And his increasingly erratic behavior under the pressure of his legal difficulties. And Haley revealing his manifold insecurities. All these facts require her to run a MANA campaign: Make America Normal Again.

Trump's electoral weakness is as obvious as is the probability of a Haley landslide against Biden. Trump was weaker in the Iowa caucuses (51 percent) than in the 2020 election in Iowa (53 percent). He won just 30 percent of independents in New Hampshire, where 21 percent of voters in the Republican primary said they would not support Trump in November. In 21 coming Republican primaries, including 11 of the 15 on Super Tuesday (March 5), voters do not have to be registered Republicans.

South Carolinians, remember this: In 2020, Trump lost the suburbs by 10 percent. And 6 percent more women than men voted. *And Biden carried women by a larger margin than Trump carried men.* Why would anyone consider Trump a stronger candidate than Haley against Biden?

This is a cliché: It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. This is a fact: Haley is the last candle fending off darkness.

Many South Carolinians are eager to snuff out Republican competition by supporting Trump. Do they wonder why Biden, too, ardently wants Trump's nomination guaranteed immediately? If, however, South Carolina prolongs the nominating process by supporting Haley, there will be time for pleasant Republican surprises and sudden Democratic forebodings.

georgewill@washpost.com.



George Will

## Finally, Biden admits: there's a crisis at the border

What do you call it when somewhere between 6 and 8 million people enter the United States illegally in the course of three years? Many people would call it a crisis, albeit a man-made one, since the reason so many have been able to cross illegally into the United States is the refusal, by President Joe Biden, to enforce immigration laws that authorize him to stop the incursion at any time.

For years, the Biden administration denied the seriousness of the situation and steadfastly refused to call the crisis a crisis. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, in particular, has gone to great lengths to avoid the word. On many occasions Mayorkas has conceded that the situation is a "challenge," but definitely, absolutely, totally not a crisis.

On March 1, 2021, as the Biden administration was just beginning its long, ambitious project to open the border, Mayorkas met the press in the White House briefing room and pointedly declined to call the situation on the border, in which the number of illegal crossers was already skyrocketing, a "crisis." Mayorkas wouldn't even discourage illegal crossers from coming to the border. He just asked them to wait a little while so the Biden administration could get things ready for them.

"We are not saying, 'Don't come,'" Mayorkas said. "We are saying, 'Don't come now because we will be able to deliver a safe and orderly process to them as quickly as possible.'"



Byron York

And on it went. As the number of illegal crossings grew and grew, Mayorkas would declare, with a straight face, that the border was "closed." He told potential illegal border crossers not to come while at the same time worked to increase the administration's ability to process, care for, and relocate the illegal crossers. Talk about a mixed message. Nobody listened to the administration's declaration that the border was "closed." Instead, they just came right in, and, as promised, Biden allowed most of them to stay.

Through it all, the president would never agree that the situation on the border constituted a crisis. So now, fast forward to today's standoff in the Senate over a bill that would include, all in one big package, aid to Ukraine, aid to Israel, aid to Taiwan and a far-reaching reworking of the immigration system. Biden has insisted that they must all be passed together, all or nothing. If Congress were to pass a bill with one or two of those provisions, but not the others, Biden has said he would veto it.

The problem with Biden's ultimatum is that it is almost impossible to pass a far-reaching reworking of the immigration system. Lawmakers have tried and failed for decades. It is the most difficult and intractable issue in American politics. So Biden has linked desperately needed aid to Ukraine, for example, to passing an immigration bill, which reduces the chances of success to nearly zero.

With Congress deadlocked, Biden has begun to make wild promises.

Campaigning in South Carolina recently, he said, "If that bill were the law today, I'd shut down the border right now and fix it quickly." That's hard to believe, to say the least. From the moment he became president of the United States, Biden has had the authority to stop or restrict the flow of illegal migrants into the U.S. He needs no new law to give him that authority. In fact, what the bill under consideration would actually do is regularize the arrival of up to 5,000 illegal migrants into the United States each and every day. Only if the level rose above that for a week would Biden take action to stop the flow. And even then, as always, there would be a lot of restrictions.

But give Biden this: In his desperate campaigning for an immigration bill, the president has done something else neither he nor anyone in his administration has ever done: He has admitted that the situation on the border is a crisis.

In a statement last Friday, Biden said he had directed administration officials "to begin negotiations with a bipartisan group of senators to seriously, and finally, address the border crisis." He finished the statement with a challenge to Congress: "If you're serious about the border crisis, pass a bipartisan bill and I will sign it."

A crisis! Finally, Biden has conceded what has been obvious from nearly the moment he took office. That won't make the Capitol Hill negotiations go any better — they are probably doomed to fail — but it is a major step in the president admitting reality.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner



**Entertainment under construction**

A few of the cast members of the coming production of "Noir Suspicions" are shown as they were rehearsing for the murder/mystery that will be presented on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 16 and 17, at the Auditorium at Life Community Church. Left to right are Ralph Tuttle, Johanne Lichsten, David Shepherd, Matthew Elwell, Tim Bryan, Yank Lowe and Heather Barkley. Show only tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for those 12 and under while Show and Dessert tickets are \$30 per person. (Photo provided)

**Events at the Fort Wayne Museum of Art**

The International Glass Invitational exhibit will be on view through Feb. 18th and the works by Brooklyn-born artist Robert Kipniss will be through Feb. 25th. The new Glass Wing will continue to showcase the Paul Stankard Paperweights from the Shaffer Collection.

After Hours: Wine by the Glass get-togethers are planned for the Saturdays of Feb. 10 (American Southwest glass) and March 23 (Australian glass) and are free for museum members and \$20 for non-members. Wine tasting and a tour of the Glass Studio will be led by Jeff Armstrong, FWOMA president and Charles Shepard,

CEO from 5 to 6 p.m. RSVP to [fwmoa.org/events](http://fwmoa.org/events).

Live music and sweet treats will be offered on Thursday, Feb. 11, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. at the 2nd Thursday's museum event. Admission is free and the Paradigm Gallery will be open for last minute Valentine's gifts.

Regular gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (until 8 p.m. on Thursdays) and Sunday noon to 5 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 students (PreK-college) and seniors and \$25 for families. General admission is free on Thursdays from 5 to 8 p.m.

**Coffee concerts at crescendo by 'The Phil' groups**

Fort Wayne's Crescendo Coffee Cafe (by the Clyde) will host monthly Wednesday morning concerts by small groups of musicians from the Wayne Philharmonic over the next few months.

Scheduled dates include: Feb. 7, March 6, April 2 and May 15. All concerts begin at 10 a.m. with coffee and breakfast items available for purchase. The concerts are free.

**Fireside Chili Hike at Ouabache State Park**

Ouabache State Park will host its first Chili Hike on Thursday, Feb. 22, from 5-6:30 p.m.

Participants are encouraged to hike on their own on one of the park's five Trails after which they are invited to the Lodge building by the Kunkel Lake for chili served beside a crackling fire. Chili and refreshments will be provided by the Friends of Ouabache.

People can then stay for the Friends of Ouabache's monthly meeting at 6:30 p.m. to hear about the park's 2024 events.

For more details contact the park office at 260-824-0926 or [JCincotta@dnr.in.gov](mailto:JCincotta@dnr.in.gov).

**Reduce your dementia risk**

*Also: The childhood obesity epidemic*

*Question: I come from a family where a few older folks developed dementia. What can I do to help prevent that fate? (I am 52.) — Dwayne R., Moline, Illinois*

Answer: Dr. Oz knows how you feel since his mother developed dementia at age 80, but there is a lot you can do to protect your brain. In his book, "The Great Age Reboot," Dr. Mike details 40 choices that have been shown in at least two studies to either decrease your risk for dementia or increase brain reserve. And in 2020, The Lancet Commission on Dementia Prevention identified 12 modifiable risk factors that can delay or prevent 40 percent of dementia cases. The modifiable risk factors include hearing loss in mid-life, smoking in later life, less education in early life, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, physical inactivity, social isolation, excessive alcohol intake, exposure to air pollution later in life, and head injury in mid-life.

The Lancet Commission says, to reduce dementia risks:

- From age 40, maintain systolic blood pressure of 130 mm/Hg or less. We say aim for less than 125/85.
- Protect ears from high noise levels; use hearing aids when needed.
- Reduce exposure to air pollution and second-hand tobacco smoke.
- Stop smoking — or never start.
- Prevent head injury
- Limit drinking to less than 21 servings weekly.
- Practice activities that improve endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility.
- Prevent or reverse obesity and diabetes.
- Provide children with a good

elementary education.

Getting started: The science-backed advice at [LongevityPlaybook.com](http://LongevityPlaybook.com) and [iHerb.com](http://iHerb.com) sets out simple steps to protect your brain. Two of our favorite tips on preventing cognitive decline are:

1. Find a posse and a purpose. That provides support, stimulation and meaning to your daily life — motivating you to make healthier choices in other aspects of life. At [LongevityPlaybook.com](http://LongevityPlaybook.com), you will find experts available 24/7 for a chat, email or call to provide support and help decrease your dementia risks.
2. Join support groups if you need help controlling your eating habits, smoking or drinking. And check out the iHerb blog, "Quitting Time," for tips on natural addiction-easing aids.

*Question: I'm a kindergarten teacher and I'm seeing more and more children who are seriously overweight. What should I try to let their parents know about the risks they are facing? — Shelley P., Chicago*

Answer: A new study published in the journal Pediatrics finds that the number of kids enrolled in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program who struggle with severe obesity has increased to about 2 percent. Nationally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that almost 13 percent of 2-5-year-olds are obese and around 21 percent of 6-11-year-olds are — and many more are overweight. Excess weight increases youngsters' risk of premature disease (diabetes and heart disease) and disability (joint problems). It also restricts their ability to actively play, is associated with social distress and



Mehmet Oz, M.D. and Mike Roizen, M.D.

inhibits their ability to learn.

Childhood obesity happens for a constellation of reasons. Having one obese parent means a child has a 50 percent chance of becoming obese; two obese parents and the risk jumps to 80 percent. Kids also may not have a steady supply of healthy foods, may live in areas where outdoor play is restricted, or may have schools with inadequate recess programs.

As a teacher (or a parent who decides to get involved), you can help kids by making sure they have plenty of physical activity during the school day. You may also be able to help your school provide improved nutrition through the National School Lunch Program ([www.fns.usda.gov/nslp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp)) and School Breakfast Program ([www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/school-breakfast-program](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/school-breakfast-program)). Check out "Strengthening School Meals for Healthier Kids" at [usda.gov](http://usda.gov).

Working with parents, you can offer suggestions for healthier "from home" meals that contain one piece of fruit, non-sweetened beverages, and whole grain breads. And you can provide simple nutrition lessons to the kids that identify healthy, tasty foods so they understand their choices. Good luck!

**Area Things to See and Do**

**ALL FOR ONE PRODUCTIONS, FORT WAYNE**  
[www.allforonefw.org](http://www.allforonefw.org)

**ALLEN CO. WAR MEMORIAL COLISEUM**  
Boat Show: Feb. 9-11; Show Me Reptile Show: Feb. 10; Disney on Ice: Feb. 22-25; Baby Fair & Family Expo: Feb. 24; Bryan Adams Tour: Feb. 28; Home & Garden Show: Feb. 29-March 3; [www.memorialcoliseum.com](http://www.memorialcoliseum.com)

**ARENA DINNER THEATER, FORT WAYNE**  
"Funny Money," March 1-16; "A Delightful Quarantine," April 19-May 4; "The Drowsy Chaperone," June 14-29. [www.arenadinnertheatre.org](http://www.arenadinnertheatre.org)

**CLYDE THEATRE, FORT WAYNE**  
Nicle Creek: Feb. 16; [ClydeTheatre.com](http://ClydeTheatre.com) or at 1-800-514-3849.

**EMBASSY THEATER, FORT WAYNE**  
<http://fwembassytheatre.org/events>

**FIRE AND LIGHT PRODUCTIONS**  
"Finding Nemo Jr.," April 11-13, Arts United enter, 303 E. Main St., Fort Wayne. Tickets at [fireandlightproductions.com](http://fireandlightproductions.com).

**1ST PRESBYTERIAN THEATRE, FORT WAYNE**  
[firstpresfortwayne.org/theater/](http://firstpresfortwayne.org/theater/)

**BOTANICAL CONSERVATORY**  
Botanical Speedway: through April 7; [botanicalconservatory.org](http://botanicalconservatory.org).

**FORT WAYNE CIVIC THEATRE**  
"The Color Purple," Feb. 9-18, 2024; "Six Degrees of Separation," March 15-24; "Jersey Boys," May 4-19; "Something Rotten," July 21-30. Arts United Center box office 260-424-5220; info at [www.fwcivic.org](http://www.fwcivic.org).

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Etix.com

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[ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com)

**LERNER THEATRE, ELKHART**  
Colin Mochrie: Feb. 10; Rodney Carrington: Feb. 23; Saxon & Uriah Heep: Hell, Fire & Chaos: May 12; [TheLerner.com](http://TheLerner.com)

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[wagonwheelcenter.org](http://wagonwheelcenter.org)

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# Knights get second at Jets' dual meet, Panthers first

By RYAN WALKER

MONROE — The Snider Panthers were the winners of the dual meet at Adams Central with Norwell on Monday.

By just seven points, Snider topped the Knights in a 110-103 score, while the hosting Flying Jets put up 96 points.

This meet was unique, as it was the first where the boys' team traveled without the girls' team, who finished their season in the sectional over the weekend. It was also the final one of the regular season, so Norwell head coach Stephanie Scott mixed the lineup around to keep things loose.

She also flipped the lineup around some due to some of the injuries and illness happening this week and took it easy.

"They did well tonight," Scott said after the meet. "We have a few who are injured and not feeling well, so for what we've got going on with the team at the moment, we did really well. Their spirits are up and had fun tonight."

The team is swimming loose right now,

a calm before the storm that is the sectional beginning next Thursday, Feb. 15.

To prepare, the team will be going into a taper either Tuesday or Wednesday. The taper will include high-intensity workouts with more rest in between to recover and train hard for the big showdown at Jay County.

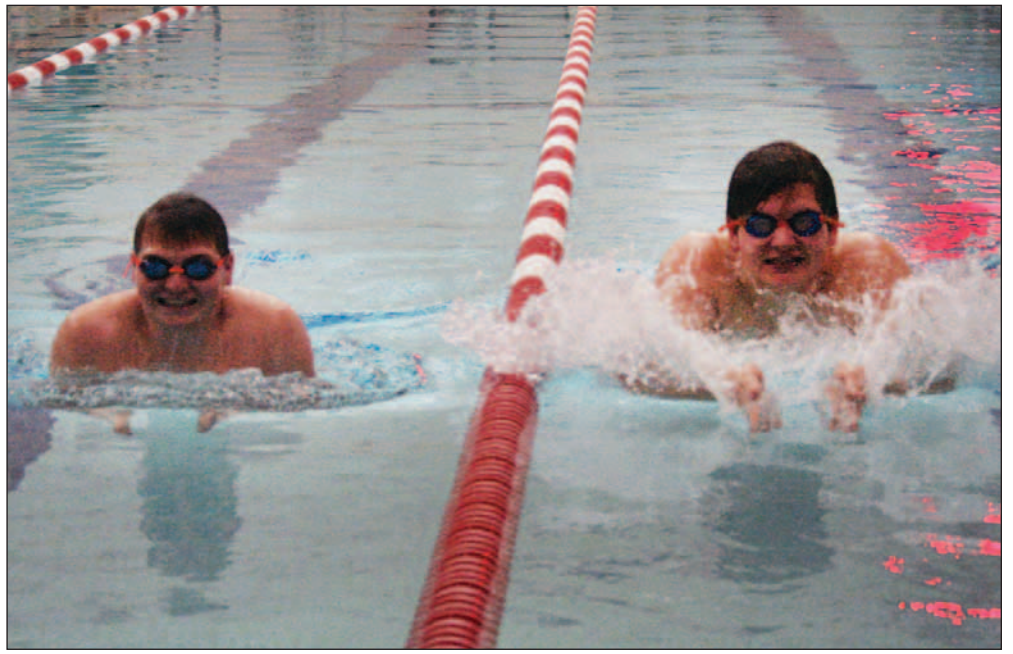
This year's team will hope to defend its 2022-23 sectional championship but will be doing it with less swimmers on the roster due to six key graduates from that squad.

That sectional will take place at Jay County beginning at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 15.

### Event Winners

- Ethan Williamson, Colten Strunk, Parker McCartney and Kale Meredith in the 200-yard medley relay.
- Meredith in the 200-yard freestyle.
- Williamson in the 100-yard backstroke.
- McCartney in the 100-yard breaststroke.

ryan@news-banner.com



A loose bunch of Norwell swimmers Colten Strunk (left) and Rylan Heyerly (right) enjoy competing in the breaststroke at Adams Central High School. Head coach Stephanie Scott had her team have some fun during their final regular season match against Snider and the hosting Flying Jets (Photos by Ryan Walker)

## Knights net 5 on all-NE8 team

The Northeast 8 Conference made its selections for the girls' basketball season, and Norwell made its mark.

The Knights, also the conference champion with a perfect 7-0 record, had their entire starting lineup on the list.

On the first team were Kennedy Fuelling, Makenzie Fuess and Vanessa Rosswurm.

Dekota Hubble made the second team, and Annabelle Johnson honorable mention.

Norwell recently won the sectional championship over NE8 foe Bellmont on Saturday, advancing to the regional title match set for 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 10 at Caston High School against Benton Central.

## High School Calendar

### TUESDAY, FEB. 6

BOYS BASKETBALL: Heritage at Norwell, 7:45 p.m.; Bluffton at Manchester, 7:30 p.m.; Elwood at Southern Wells, 6:45 p.m.

SWIMMING & DIVING: (Boys only): Bluffton at Huntington North, 5:30 p.m.

### WEDNESDAY, FEB. 7

No events scheduled.

### THURSDAY, FEB. 8

No events scheduled.

### FRIDAY, FEB. 9

BOYS BASKETBALL: Norwell at Huntington North, 7:45 p.m.; Northfield at Bluffton, 7:30 p.m.; Woodlan at Southern Wells, 6:45 p.m.

### SATURDAY, FEB. 10

GIRLS BASKETBALL: (Regional final) Norwell vs. Benton Central at Caston High School, 4 p.m.

WRESTLING: (Semi-State): Norwell, Bluffton, Southern Wells at War Memorial Coliseum (Fort Wayne), 8:30 a.m.

### MONDAY, FEB. 12

No events scheduled.



Knights' Ethan Williamson gasps for air during the 100-yard butterfly.

## All players from 2018 world junior team suspended by Hockey Canada pending appeal

By STEPHEN WHYNO  
AP Hockey Writer

Hockey Canada said Monday all 22 players from its 2018 world junior team remain suspended from representing the country at any international tournaments where the federation has control over rosters — including the Olympics and world championships — in light of sexual assault charges filed against five members of that team.

That includes NHL All-Stars Cale Makar of the Colorado Avalanche and Robert Thomas of the St. Louis Blues, who are not among those charged. Hockey Canada, in a statement responding to charges, said anyone involved with that team is "ineligible to play, coach, officiate or volunteer with Hockey Canada-sanctioned programs."

A Hockey Canada spokesperson confirmed to The Associated Press that the appeals process that began in November is ongoing. After announcing the NHL would allow its players to participate in the next two Olympics, Commissioner Gary Bettman referenced players appealing Hockey Canada's decision.

Makar has repeatedly denied any involvement in the alleged sexual assault that led to charges against Carter Hart of the Philadelphia Flyers, Michael McLeod and Cal Foote of the New Jersey Devils, Dillon Dube of the Calgary Flames and former

NHL player Alex Formenton.

"I've been kind of straightforward from the start that I wasn't there," Makar said Thursday during All-Star Weekend in Toronto. "I can't stress enough that I wasn't a part of that."

Thomas, when asked about the situation, said: "I've said my comments and my statements. I've cooperated with the investigation, and that all I'm going to comment (on) at this."

Bettman and Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly were asked about those players' eligibility in tournaments moving forward, including the "4 Nations Face-off" scheduled to include the U.S., Canada, Sweden and Finland in February 2025. Daly said Hockey Canada had no say in who could play in that NHL-run event.

"This tournament is our tournament," Daly said. "It will be our eligibility rules, not Hockey Canada's."

Makar, a 2022 Stanley Cup champion and playoff MVP who was also voted the league's best defenseman that season, said it was tough not to be able to play in the world championships last year because of the Hockey Canada suspension.

"But at the end of the day, actions have consequences, and that's what I was taught growing up," Makar said.

## UConn, Purdue and North Carolina stay atop AP Top 25

By AARON BEARD  
AP Basketball Writer

Reigning national champion Connecticut, Purdue and North Carolina remained atop The Associated Press Top 25 men's college basketball poll for the third consecutive week, while South Carolina cracked the rankings for the first time in nearly seven years.

The Huskies earned 45 of 61 first-place votes to remain at No. 1 for the fourth straight week in Monday's poll, while the Boilermakers topped the ballots of 16 other voters.

The top of the poll remained set after a big week that included four top-10 matchups over the weekend, with Purdue winning at Wisconsin and

UNC beating rival Duke. The week also included Kansas beating Houston, which vaulted the Jayhawks up four spots to No. 4 and dropped the Cougars one spot to No. 5.

Tennessee fell one spot to No. 6 after losing at home to the now-No. 15 Gamecocks but followed that with a win at Kentucky in the weekend's other top-10 tussle. The Wildcats tumbled seven spots to No. 17 after losses to the Vols and Florida.

Marquette, Arizona, Duke and Illinois rounded out the top 10, with the Wildcats and Fighting Illini returning after stints earlier this season.

### IN AND OUT

South Carolina is making its first appearance in the poll since February 2017, a

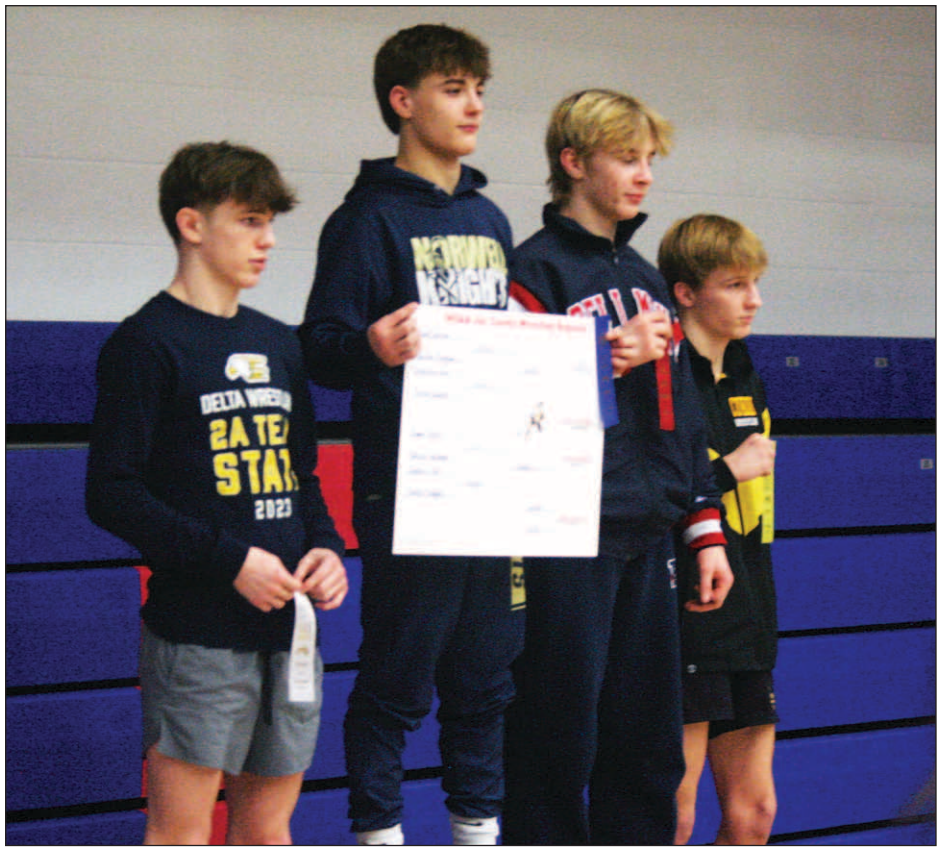
season that saw the Gamecocks make a surprise run to the Final Four. Lamont Paris' squad has won five straight games, and its 19 wins already surpassed its season haul for any year since that run.

The Gamecocks joined No. 24 San Diego State as the week's new additions, replacing Oklahoma (No. 23) and TCU (No. 25).

### RISING AND SLIDING

Alabama had the week's biggest jump, moving up eight spots to No. 16 after rising to the top of the Southeastern Conference standings at 8-1. No. 13 Baylor was next, rising five spots after a home win against No. 14 Iowa State.

In all, nine teams moved up from last week's poll.



### Regional champions

Two wrestlers from Wells County won regional championships Saturday afternoon at Jay County High School. Top, Norwell's Hunter Douglas (second from left) holds up his 120-pound bracket with the rest of the top three from his class. Bottom, Bluffton's Johnny Cruz (second from left) holds his 285-pound bracket along with his other competition. (Photos by Ryan Walker)

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# News-Banner Scoreboard

## FOOTBALL

### NFL

**Conference Championships**  
**Sunday, Jan. 28**  
**Conference Championships**  
**Sunday, Jan. 28**  
 Kansas City 17, Baltimore 10  
 San Francisco 34, Detroit 31  
**Super Bowl**  
**Sunday, Feb. 11**  
**At Las Vegas**  
 Kansas City vs. San Francisco, 6:30 p.m. (CBS)

## BASKETBALL

### High School

**Saturday boys' Scores**  
 Adams Central 82, Leo 49  
 Anderson 64, Marion 59  
 Bedford N. Lawrence 50, Crawfordsville 38  
 Benton Central 60, Frankfort 42  
 Bluffton 37, Heritage 31  
 Center Grove 79, Floyd Central 45  
 Columbia City 66, Norwell 50  
 Daleville 65, Seton Catholic 62  
 Delta 55, Mississinewa 36  
 Eastern Hancock 54, Cowan 50  
 Elwood 52, Hamilton 18  
 Ft. Wayne Canterbury 68, Fremont 45  
 Ft. Wayne Luers 59, DeKalb 41  
 Ft. Wayne South 81, Woodlan 57  
 Indpls Ben Davis 62, Zionsville 49  
 Indy Brebeuf 70, Indpls Park Tudor 57  
 Lawrence Central 74, Liberty Christian 51  
 Lawrence North 93, Ft. Wayne North 59  
 Maconaquah 98, Western 78  
 Madison-Grant 64, Wes-Del 53  
 New Albany 72, Columbus East 68  
 New Haven 49, Huntington North 33  
 New Palestine 73, Southport 60  
 Northwestern 73, Southwood 52  
 Oak Hill 76, Logansport 67  
 Rockford Parkway, Ohio 45, S. Adams 34  
 Tipton 69, Shenandoah 46  
 Warsaw 73, Chesterton 62  
 Westview 53, Plymouth 39  
 Westville 51, Winamac 36  
 Whitko 46, Garrett 26  
 Winchester 54, Hamilton Hts. 52

### Saturday Girls' Scores

**IHSAA Sectionals**  
**Championship**  
**Class 4A**  
 1. Lake Central  
 Lake Central 51, Merrillville 39  
 2. Valparaiso  
 Valparaiso 41, Crown Point 28  
 3. S. Bend Washington  
 S. Bend Washington 77, S. Bend Adams 45  
 4. Northridge  
 Northridge 53, Penn 37  
 5. Carroll (Ft. Wayne)  
 Ft. Wayne Snider 68, Carroll (Ft. Wayne) 29  
 6. Columbia City  
 Homestead 57, Columbia City 49  
 7. Kokomo  
 McCutcheon 51, Lafayette Harrison 49  
 8. Hamilton Southeastern  
 Noblesville 49, Hamilton Southeastern 45  
 9. Pendleton Heights  
 Mt. Vernon (Fortville) 48, New Palestine 39  
 10. Indpls Cathedral  
 Lawrence Central 54, Warren Central 39  
 11. Indpls Pike

Indpls Pike 61, Franklin Central 60  
 12. Avon  
 Plainfield 59, Terre Haute North 12  
 13. Mooresville  
 Center Grove 61, Mooresville 41  
 14. Whiteland  
 Franklin 45, Whiteland 42  
 15. Floyd Central  
 Bedford N. Lawrence 43, Jennings Co. 39  
 16. Evansville Harrison  
 Evansville North 52, Evansville Central 46

### Class 3A

17. Highland  
 Hanover Central 36, Highland 33  
 18. Rochester  
 Bremen 55, Tippecanoe Valley 53  
 19. New Prairie  
 New Prairie 56, S. Bend Clay 38  
 20. W. Noble  
 NorthWood 34, Fairfield 32  
 21. Garrett  
 Woodlan 53, Ft. Wayne Concordia 45

22. Twin Lakes  
 Benton Central 48, W. Lafayette 43  
 23. Maconaquah  
 Norwell 57, Belmont 40  
 24. Yorktown  
 Hamilton Hts. 37, Jay Co. 36  
 25. Cascade  
 Danville 53, Lebanon 14  
 26. Owen Valley  
 Indian Creek 52, Edgewood 35  
 27. Indpls Chatard  
 Indpls Chatard 59, Heritage Christian 53  
 28. Beech Grove  
 Speedway 52, Purdue Polytechnic 42

29. Lawrenceburg  
 Greensburg 41, Batesville 22  
 30. Charlestown  
 Scottsburg 53, Madison 36  
 31. Southridge  
 Washington 52, Vincennes 42  
 32. Gibson Southern  
 Gibson Southern 78, Boonville 35

### Class 2A

33. Lake Station  
 Andean 40, Illiana Christian 20  
 34. N. Judson  
 LaVille 47, N. Judson 37  
 35. Eastside  
 Fremont 41, Central Noble 38  
 36. N. Miami  
 Cass 45, Winamac 25  
 37. S. Adams  
 Ft. Wayne Luers 59, Whitko 46  
 38. Delphi  
 Lafayette Catholic 45, Delphi 22  
 39. Elwood  
 Eastbrook 62, Blackford 58, 4OT  
 40. Lapel  
 Lapel 62, Winchester 21  
 41. Northeastern  
 Northeastern 58, Shenandoah 21  
 42. Indpls Secina  
 Eastern Hancock 67, Indpls Secina 11

43. Park Tudor  
 Sheridan 47, Covenant Christian 28  
 44. S. Putnam  
 Parke Heritage 43, Greencastle 32  
 45. N. Decatur  
 N. Decatur 57, S. Ripley 39  
 46. Providence  
 Brownstown 56, Austin 42  
 47. N. Knox  
 Linton 43, N. Knox 36  
 48. S. Spencer  
 S. Spencer 38, Crawford Co. 33

### Class 1A

49. Morgan Twp.  
 Morgan Twp. 28, Kouts 24  
 50. Culver  
 Michigan City Marquette 52, Triton 39  
 51. Lakewood Park

Bethany Christian 59, Ft. Wayne Blackhawk 55  
 52. S. Newton  
 Canton 37, Tri-County 36  
 53. Northfield  
 Northfield 41, Southern Wells 22  
 54. Attica  
 Clinton Central 48, Rossville 33  
 55. Anderson Prep  
 Daleville 39, Anderson Prep Academy 38  
 56. Union City  
 Daleville 39, Anderson Prep Academy 38

57. Bloomfield  
 N. Central (Farmersburg) 33, Shakamak 26  
 58. Bethesda Christian  
 Bethesda Christian 62, IMSA 22  
 59. Eminence  
 Eminence 52, Greenwood Christian 26

60. Southwestern (Shelby)  
 Jac-Cen-Del 49, Oldenburg 41  
 61. W. Washington  
 Lanesville 41, Borden 20  
 62. New Washington  
 Trinity Lutheran 67, Rising Sun 58  
 63. Barr-Reeve  
 Barr-Reeve 33, Orleans 27  
 64. Wood Memorial  
 Wood Memorial 45, Evansville Christian 31

## College

### Men's Basketball Scores

**Monday, Feb. 5**  
 Virginia 60, Miami 38

### Sunday, Feb. 4

**EAST**  
 Villanova 68, Providence 50

### SOUTH

Wright St. 85, N. Kentucky 78  
**MIDWEST**  
 Fort Wayne 82, Youngstown St. 78  
 Illinois 87, Nebraska 84, OT  
 Loyola Chicago 76, Davidson 63  
 Milwaukee 87, IUUI 67  
 Purdue 75, Wisconsin 69  
 S. Dakota St. 70, South Dakota 67

### FAR WEST

Arizona 82, Stanford 71

### Saturday, Feb. 3

**EAST**  
 BYU 86, West Virginia 73  
 Hofstra 59, Towson 56  
 Marquette 91, Georgetown 57  
 Pittsburgh 70, Notre Dame 60  
 UConn 77, St. John's 64

### SOUTH

Alabama 99, Mississippi St. 67  
 Auburn 91, Mississippi 77  
 FAU 102, Tulsa 70  
 James Madison 78, Old Dominion 63

LSU 95, Arkansas 74  
 Louisville 101, Florida St. 92  
 Memphis 65, Wichita St. 63  
 Miami 82, Virginia Tech 74  
 NC State 82, Georgia Tech 76  
 North Carolina 93, Duke 84  
 South Carolina 72, Georgia 62  
 Tennessee 103, Kentucky 92  
 Vanderbilt 68, Missouri 61  
 Virginia 66, Clemson 65  
 Wake Forest 99, Syracuse 70

### MIDWEST

Ball St. 77, W. Michigan 67  
 Bradley 73, Illinois St. 60  
 Cent. Michigan 77, Bowling Green 76, 2OT  
 Evansville 63, Valparaiso 62  
 Fordham 67, Saint Louis 65  
 Indiana St. 75, Drake 67  
 Kansas 78, Houston 65  
 Michigan St. 63, Maryland 54  
 Minnesota 75, Northwestern 66, OT  
 Missouri St. 87, Belmont 80

Murray St. 71, N. Iowa 43  
 N. Illinois 76, E. Michigan 66  
 North Dakota 60, N. Dakota St. 58  
 Oakland 83, Cleveland St. 71  
 Ohio 78, Miami (Ohio) 69  
 Oral Roberts 82, Denver 76  
 Penn St. 85, Indiana 71  
 Robert Morris 75, Detroit 67  
 Rutgers 69, Michigan 59  
 Xavier 93, DePaul 68

**SOUTHWEST**  
 Baylor 70, Iowa St. 68  
 Cincinnati 75, Texas Tech 72  
 Liberty 67, UTEP 65  
 Oklahoma St. 75, Kansas St. 72  
 Texas 77, TCU 66  
 Texas A&M 67, Florida 66

**FAR WEST**  
 Boise St. 94, Air Force 56  
 California 81, Arizona St. 66  
 Colorado St. 73, Fresno St. 61  
 Grand Canyon 86, Utah Valley 67

Saint Mary's (Cal.) 64, Gonzaga 62  
 San Diego St. 81, Utah St. 67  
 Southern Cal 82, Oregon St. 54  
 UCLA 71, Oregon 63  
 UNLV 62, Wyoming 48  
 Utah 73, Colorado 68  
 Washington St. 90, Washington 87, OT

**Women's Basketball Scores**  
**Monday, Feb. 5**  
 NC State 77, Louisville 67

**Sunday, Feb. 4**  
 Syracuse 75, Boston College 63  
 Florida St. 75, Miami 68  
 Georgia 72, Kentucky 65  
 Virginia Tech 70, North Carolina 61, OT

Ohio St. 74, Indiana 69  
 South Carolina 85, Ole Miss 56  
 Texas 61, Kansas St. 54  
 Stanford 80, UCLA 60  
 Colorado 86, Washington 57  
 LSU 106, Florida 66  
 UConn 78, St. John's 63  
 Baylor 83, Houston 60  
 Notre Dame 78, Pittsburgh 53  
 USC 79, Cal 69

Virginia Tech 70, North Carolina 61  
 Oregon State 64, Oregon 60  
 Utah 73, Washington St. 61  
 Syracuse 74, Boston College 63  
 Creighton 75, Butler 65  
 Illinois St. 64, Indiana St. 59  
 Tennessee 80, Missouri 69  
 Northwestern 69, Wisconsin 43

**Saturday, Feb. 3**  
 Iowa 93, Maryland 85  
 Gonzaga 104, Pacific 39  
 West Virginia 76, BYU 69  
 Princeton 76, Brown 63  
 Ball State 97, Ohio 66  
 Cincinnati 74, Texas Tech 56  
 Toledo 82, Bowling Green 70  
 Miami (OH) 58, Akron 48  
 Rutgers 71, Nebraska 70  
 Michigan 80, Penn St. 75  
 Bradley 79, Evansville 72  
 Buffalo 75, Eastern Michigan 63

## NBA

### EASTERN CONFERENCE

**Atlantic Division**

W	L	Pct	GB	
Boston	38	12	.760	—
New York	32	18	.640	6
Philadelphia	30	19	.612	7½
Brooklyn	20	29	.408	17½
Toronto	17	33	.340	21

**Southeast Division**

W	L	Pct	GB	
Orlando	27	23	.540	—
Miami	26	24	.520	1
Atlanta	22	28	.440	5

Charlotte 10 39 .204 16½  
 Washington 9 40 .184 17½

### Central Division

W	L	Pct	GB	
Cleveland	32	16	.667	—
Milwaukee	33	17	.660	—
Indiana	28	23	.549	5½
Chicago	23	27	.460	10
Detroit	6	43	.122	26½

### WESTERN CONFERENCE

#### Southwest Division

W	L	Pct	GB	
New Orleans	29	21	.580	—
Dallas	27	23	.540	2
Houston	23	26	.469	5½
Memphis	18	32	.360	11
San Antonio	10	40	.200	19

#### Northwest Division

W	L	Pct	GB	
Oklahoma City	35	15	.700	—
Minnesota	35	15	.700	—
Denver	35	16	.686	½
Utah	25	26	.490	10½
Portland	15	35	.300	20

#### Pacific Division

W	L	Pct	GB	
L.A. Clippers	34	15	.694	—
Sacramento	29	20	.592	5
Phoenix	29	21	.580	5½
L.A. Lakers	27	25	.519	8½
Golden State	22	25	.468	11

### Sunday's Games

Orlando 111, Detroit 99  
 Phoenix 140, Washington 112  
 Boston 131, Memphis 91  
 Indiana 115, Charlotte 99  
 L.A. Clippers 103, Miami 95  
 Minnesota 111, Houston 90  
 Oklahoma City 135, Toronto 127, 2OT

Utah 123, Milwaukee 108  
 Denver 112, Portland 103

### Monday's Games

L.A. Lakers 124, Charlotte 118  
 Cleveland 136, Sacramento 110  
 Dallas 118, Philadelphia 102  
 Golden State 109, Brooklyn 98  
 L.A. Clippers 149, Atlanta 144  
 New Orleans 138, Toronto 100

### Tuesday's Games

Houston at Indiana, 7 p.m.  
 Dallas at Brooklyn, 7:30 p.m.  
 Memphis at New York, 7:30 p.m.  
 Orlando at Miami, 7:30 p.m.  
 Minnesota at Chicago, 8 p.m.  
 Oklahoma City at Utah, 9 p.m.  
 Milwaukee at Phoenix, 10 p.m.

### Wednesday's Games

Cleveland at Washington, 7 p.m.  
 Toronto at Charlotte, 7 p.m.  
 Atlanta at Boston, 7:30 p.m.  
 Golden State at Philadelphia, 7:30 p.m.

San Antonio at Miami, 7:30 p.m.  
 Detroit at Sacramento, 10 p.m.  
 New Orleans at L.A. Clippers, 10 p.m.

### Thursday's Games

Golden State at Indiana, 7 p.m.  
 San Antonio at Orlando, 7 p.m.  
 Cleveland at Brooklyn, 7:30 p.m.  
 Dallas at New York, 7:30 p.m.  
 Chicago at Memphis, 8 p.m.  
 Minnesota at Milwaukee, 8 p.m.  
 Utah at Phoenix, 9 p.m.  
 Denver at L.A. Lakers, 10 p.m.  
 Detroit at Portland, 10 p.m.

## HOCKEY

### NHL

#### EASTERN CONFERENCE

**Atlantic Division**

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	49	31	9	9	71173	128
Florida	49	31	14	4	66158	127
Tampa Bay	50	27	18	5	59175	164
Toronto	48	25	15	8	58168	153
Detroit	50	26	18	6	58176	161
Buffalo	49	22	23	4	48146	155
Montreal	49	20	21	8	48136	175
Ottawa	47	20	25	2	42158	170

#### Metropolitan Division

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
N.Y. Rangers	50	31	16	3	65163	143
Carolina	48	28	15	5	61163	144
Philadelphia	50	25	19	6	56147	148
N.Y. Islanders	50	21	17	12	54146	168
Pittsburgh	46	22	17	7	51138	126
New Jersey	47	24	20	3	51161	168
Washington	47	22	18	7	51115	146
Columbus	50	16	24	10	42148	184

#### WESTERN CONFERENCE

**Central Division**

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	50	32	14	4	68191	155
Dallas	49	30	13	6	66183	151
Winnipeg	47	30	12	5	65148	109
St. Louis	49	26	21	2	54141	153
Nashville	51	26	23	2	54153	160
Arizona	48	23	22	3	49143	147
Minnesota	49	21	23	5	47149	166
Chicago	50	14	34	2	30105	177

**Pacific Division**

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	49	33	11	5	71186	127
Vegas	50	29	15	6	64163	138
Edmonton	45	29	15	1	59160	124
Los Angeles	48	23	15	10	56152	132
Seattle	50	21	19	10	52140	147
Calgary	49	22	22	5	49149	155
Anaheim	50	18	30	2	38129	170
San Jose	51	14	32	5	33107	199

NOTE: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

### Sunday's Games

No games scheduled

# Agriculture

## Purdue Agricultural Economics Report

**By AGDAILY**  
 Despite recession warnings and adverse precursors in 2022, the United States economy performed better than predicted in 2023.

Purdue University Department of Agricultural Economics experts annually provide insights into the national economy, trade, policy, and food prices for the year.

These findings were recently published in the Purdue Agricultural Economics Report's annual outlook, including potential outcomes of a delayed farm bill.

"As we enter 2024, the farm bill debate's complexities persist. With federal spending cuts in focus, the projected cost of the farm bill will likely take center stage in agricultural committee deliberations this year







# Senate GOP distance selves from border bill, leaving aid for Ukraine in doubt

By **STEPHEN GROVES**  
and **MARY CLARE JALONICK**  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facing a torrent of criticism from conservatives, Senate Republicans on Monday distanced themselves from a bipartisan proposal intended to clamp down on illegal border crossings, signaling a likely defeat in Congress that would leave leaders with no clear path to approve wartime aid for Ukraine.

Senate negotiators on Sunday night released a \$118 billion package of border enforcement policy and funding for Ukraine, Israel and other U.S. allies, hoping that the details would win over skeptics. The bill represented a rightward tilt in Senate negotiations over border measures, yet the backlash was intense from conservatives. They savaged the border policy proposal as insufficient, with former President Donald Trump leading the charge.

"This is a gift to the Democrats. And this sort of is a shifting of the worst border in history onto the shoulders of Republicans," Trump, the likely Republican presidential nominee, said Monday on "The Dan Bongino Show." "That's really what they want. They want this for the presidential election so they can now blame the Republicans for the worst border in history."

Many Senate Republicans — even those who have expressed support for Ukraine aid and the contours of the border policy changes — raised doubts Monday they would support the package. A private Republican meeting was scheduled in the evening to discuss it.

Sen. Roger Wicker, a Mississippi Republican, exited a meeting with other GOP leaders and told reporters, "I think the proposal is dead."

Still, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer moved toward a key test vote on Wednesday.

"The actions here in the next few days are an inflection point in history," the New York Democrat said in a floor speech Monday afternoon. "The security of our nation and of the world hangs in the balance."

Schumer worked closely with Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell on the border security package after the Kentucky Republican had insisted on the pairing as a way to win support for Ukraine aid. The Democratic leader urged his colleagues across the aisle to "tune out the political noise" and vote yes.

"For years, years our Republican colleagues have demanded we fix the border. And all along they said it should be done through legislation. Only recently did they change that when it looks like we might actually produce legislation," he said.

Both leaders have emphasized for months the urgency of approving tens of billions of dollars for Ukraine's fight, saying that the U.S.'s ability to buttress democracies around the world was at stake. Yet with the funding stuck in Congress, the Defense Department has halted shipments of ammunition and missiles to Kyiv.

McConnell said in a floor speech that "it's now time for Congress to take action" to meet global challenges, even as he decried President Joe Biden's handling of the border that has seen historic numbers of migrants crossing illegally.

"The gaping hole in our nation's sovereign borders on President Biden's watch is not going to heal itself," the Republican leader said.

Biden, speaking to reporters at a Las Vegas meeting with members of a culinary union, noted that Congress has not approved his funding requests for more Border Patrol agents and immigration judges to handle the number of migrants. "We need help," he said. "Why won't they give me the help?"

"Everything in that bipartisan bill gives me control," Biden said, adding that he was disappointed the border legislation does not address the fate of immigrants who as children entered the U.S. without authorization.

House Speaker Mike Johnson has already called the proposal "dead on arrival" if it passes the Senate, but Biden urged the Republican speaker to "pay attention to what the Senate's doing."

## Zelenskyy signals a shakeup of military leadership is imminent

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he is thinking about dismissing the country's top military officer as part of a broader leadership shakeup, a possibility that has shocked the nation fighting a war to end Russia's invasion and also worried Ukraine's Western allies.

Zelenskyy confirmed in an interview with Italian broadcaster RAI TV released late Sunday that he was thinking about removing Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the popular commander-in-chief of Ukraine's armed forces. He said he was contemplating the move to ensure the country remains led by individuals who are "convinced of victory" against Russia.

"A reset, a new beginning is necessary," Zelenskyy said. The review is "not about a single person but about the direction of the country's leadership."

"I'm thinking about this replacement, but you can't say here we replaced a single person," Zelenskyy said. "When we talk about this, I mean a replacement of a series of state leaders, not just in a single sector like the military. If we want to win, we must all push in the same direction, convinced of victory. We cannot be discouraged, let our arms fall. We must have the right positive energy."

Zelenskyy's comments were his first acknowledgement of Zaluzhnyi's possible firing. The potential ouster of the general already has caused an uproar in Ukraine and delighted the Kremlin as the war approaches its second anniversary.

Zaluzhnyi is widely respected among Ukrainian service members and considered a national hero. He is credited with stalling Russia's full-scale invasion in the early days of the war and expertly pushing back Moscow's troops.

Kyiv Mayor Vitalii Klitschko criticized the possibility of Zaluzhnyi's firing, saying it was due to the general's leadership that "many Ukrainians truly trust the armed forces."

"Today is a moment when politics might prevail over reason and country's interests," Klitschko said on social media. The mayor of Ukraine's capital city has been a vocal critic of Zelenskyy. The presidency in turn has accused Klitschko's office of inefficiencies.

It is unclear who might replace Zaluzhnyi and if his successor would command the same level of respect from Ukraine's troops and foreign defense leaders. His firing could risk degrading morale at a critical time in the war.

According to Ukrainian and Western media reports, Zelenskyy asked Zaluzhnyi to resign last week, but the general refused. Zaluzhnyi has not commented publicly on the reports.

Tensions between him and the president have been rising since a much anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive, which was launched in June with the help of an array of Western weapons, failed to produce major territory gains in Russian-occupied areas, disappointing allies.

Ukraine now is grappling with ammunition and personnel shortages while Russia is on the offensive, mounting relentless attacks. Four people were killed and at least one was injured in a Monday afternoon strike over the city of Kherson in southern Ukraine, the head of the local military administration said.

The need for a broad mobilization to beef up the number of Ukrainian troops has reportedly been one of the areas of disagreement between Zelenskyy and Zaluzhnyi.

## Some Americans have become saddled with credit card debt as rent and everyday prices remain high

NEW YORK (AP) — While the U.S. economy is broadly healthy, pockets of Americans have run through their savings and run up their credit card balances after battling inflation for more than two years.

Experts worry that members of these groups -- mostly lower- and middle-income Americans, who tend to be renters -- are falling behind on their debts and could face further deterioration of their financial health in the year ahead, particularly those who have recently resumed paying off student loans.

"The U.S. economy is currently performing better than most forecasters expected a year ago, thanks in large part to a resilient consumer," wrote Shernetta McLoud, an economist with TD Economics, in a report issued Wednesday. "However, more recently that spending is increasingly being financed by credit cards."

Americans held more than \$1.05 trillion on their credit cards in the third quarter of 2023, a record, and a figure certain to grow once the fourth-quarter data is released by Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. next month. A recent report from the credit rating company Moody's showed that credit card delinquency rates and charge-off rates, or the percent of loans that a bank believes will never be repaid, are now well above their 2019 levels and are expected to keep climbing.

These worrisome metrics coincide with the average interest rate on a bank credit card of roughly 21.5 percent, the highest it's been since the Federal Reserve started tracking the data in 1994.

"Overall, the consumer is credit healthy. However, the reality is that there are starting to be some significant signs of stress," said Silvio Tavares, president and CEO of VantageScore, one of the country's two major credit scoring systems.

Most analyses of Americans' financial

health tend to tell a tale of two consumers. On one side are the roughly two-thirds of Americans who own their homes and those who've invested in the stock market and done substantially well. They generally had the savings cushion necessary to weather high inflation. Delinquency rates on single-family homes remain at near historic lows and home prices have continued to climb.

But for the rest of America, things are looking rough.

"You have these noticeable pockets of consumers -- mostly middle- and lower-income renters who have not benefitted from the wealth effect of higher housing prices and stock prices -- who are feeling financial stress and that's driving up these delinquency levels. They've been hit very hard by inflation," said Warren Kornfeld, a senior vice president at Moody's, in an interview.

Kornfeld, who co-wrote a report last week looking at the climbing levels of delinquencies, expects them to keep climbing this year.

Consumers' financial health could play a big role in the 2024 election. President Joe Biden is running in part on his efforts to bring down costs for U.S. families. Republicans counter that Biden is to blame for higher costs in the first place.

One way to gauge this bifurcation of the American economy is by looking at the results of some major credit card companies. The customers of Capital One, Discover Financial and Synchrony have historically been those with lower credit scores, while American Express typically serves the wealthiest and well-to-do.

At Synchrony Bank, the largest issuer of retail co-brand credit cards, the charge-off rate jumped from 3.5 percent to 5.6 percent in a year. Meanwhile, roughly 4.7 percent of Synchrony customers are 30 days or more behind on their bills, which is also up from a year ago.



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