

Standing together

Wells County Chamber hosts annual dinner and awards program

By HOLLY GASKILL

The annual dinner and awards program sponsored by the Wells County Chamber of Commerce Monday made evident how the community stands together — and by the end of the evening, it did so in a round of applause.

The evening marked the 110th for the Chamber and honored the Citizens of the Year, Educators of the Year and Business of the Year.

Citizens of the Year were Jeff and Jamie Lemler, who own and operate Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton. The two were introduced by their dear friend, Jessica



Kevin Pritchard of Ruoff Mortgage was honored as the Chamber of Commerce's Ambassador of the Year. Pictured is Chamber Executive Director Erin Prible and Pritchard

Bricker, who works as the communications specialist for Bluffton-Harrison schools. Bricker had also nominated them for the award, accompanied by letters of recommendation from multiple community leaders

In addition to the service of their business, the Lemlers have been deeply involved in numerous organizations, supporting local programs, events and individuals. Bricker concluded, "Thank you to the Chamber of Commerce for endorsing what has been known all along - that it's people like Jeff and Jamie who make this community a great place to call home, raise a family and invest

in. And that it's always worth it to be kind, compassionate and generous, like the Lemlers.

In their separate speeches, Jeff and Jamie Lemler expressed a shared gratefulness for each other and the community.

Jamie led, describing how choices impact the community. Jamie explained how every day provides opportunities to help one another and brighten each other's day, but it's a choice to do so. She challenged the audience to consider the little moments where they can spread kindness and goodness, creating ripples within the community.

Jeff followed, connecting their lives to the Matthew (Continued on Page 2)



Jeff and Jamie Lemler were honored as Citizens of the Year by the Wells County Chamber of Commerce during the annual awards dinner and awards program Monday night. Pictured left to right are Braden and Macy Lemler, the couple's children, Jamie Lemler, Jeff Lemler, and Jessica Bricker, who nominated the couple for the award and introduced them during the program. (Photos by Sydney Kent)



Educators of the Year from the Wells County districts were, from left, David Butler, Mark Weinert, and at right, Jim Bueter. Awards were presented Sydney Sheltz-Kempf, the granddaughter of Mike Sailsbery, a previous Norwell superintendent who continues to support the awards. Sheltz-Kempf is also a former student of Weinert.

Local man sentenced after dealing drugs at work place

U.S. sues to block merger of Kroger and Albertsons, saying it could push prices higher

By SYDNEY KENT

A man from Bluffton who sold drugs from his work was ordered to spend the next 10 years in prison. However, it is likely that he will spend far more time behind bars due to other ongoing cases.



Devon James Schultz, 30, was sentenced to 10 years at the Indiana Department of Correction during his hearing in the Wells Circuit Court last week. Schultz received 430 days of jail credit towards his sentence

According to a

Devon James Schultz

probable cause affidavit, Schultz was the subject of backto-back undercover stings involving a "cooperating individual."

According to the affidavit, the CI

arranged to purchase both marijuana and 17 Suboxone pills in the designated smoking shed outside of Schultz's workplace at 5:58 a.m. on Oct. 26, 2022. Schultz reportedly told the CI that he did not want to text about the deal as he did not want his wife to find out.

For this, Schultz was charged with one count of dealing in a Schedule III controlled substance, a Level 4 felony, which is punishable by up to 12 years in prison.

Four days later, Schultz reportedly met again with a CI in the bathroom of his work. He sold 17 Suboxone pills and six Adderall pills to the CI for \$300.

Schultz was charged with one count of dealing in a Schedule III controlled substance, a Level 4 felony, and dealing in a Schedule II controlled substance, a Level 5 felony. If found convicted, Schultz could face up to 18 years in prison on the additional charges. However, both counts were dismissed pursuant to

(Continued on Page 2)

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

The Federal Trade Commission sued to block a proposed merger between grocery giants Kroger and Albertsons, saying the \$24.6 billion deal would eliminate competition and lead to higher prices for millions of Americans.

The FTC filed an administrative complaint against the companies Monday, which will be considered by an administrative law judge at the agency. It also filed a lawsuit with the U.S. District Court in Oregon requesting a temporary injunction blocking the merger. That lawsuit was joined by the attorneys general of eight states and the District of Columbia.

Kroger and Albertsons, two of the nation's largest grocers, agreed to merge in October 2022. The companies said a merger would help them better compete with Walmart, Amazon, Costco and other big rivals. Together, Kroger and Albertsons would control around 13% of the U.S. grocery market; Walmart controls 22%, according to J.P. Morgan analyst Ken Goldman.

Both companies, immediately after the FTC announcement, said that they will challenge the agency in court.

Kroger, based in Cincinnati, Ohio, operates 2,750 stores in 35 states and the District of Columbia, including brands like Ralphs, Smith's and Harris Teeter. Albertsons, based in Boise, Idaho, operates 2,273 stores in 34 states, including brands like Safeway, Jewel Osco and Shaw's. Together the companies employ around 700,000 people.

But the merger, announced at a time of high food-price inflation, was bound to get tough regulatory scrutiny. U.S. prices for food eaten at home typically rise 2.5% per year, but in 2022 they rose 11.4% and in 2023 they rose another 5%, according to government data. Inflation is cooling, but gradually.

"Kroger's acquisition of Albertsons would lead to additional grocery price hikes for everyday goods, further exacerbating the financial strain consumers across the coun-(Continued on Page 2)

Moon landing mission cut short, lander will stop working Tuesday

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) - A private U.S. lunar lander is expected to stop working Tuesday, its mission cut short after landing sideways near the south pole of the moon.

Intuitive Machines, the Houston company that built and flew the spacecraft, said Monday it will continue to collect data until

sunlight no longer shines on the solar panels. Based on the position of Earth and the moon, officials expect that to happen Tuesday morning. That's two to three days short of the week or so that NASA and other customers had been counting on.

The lander, named Odysseus, is the first U.S. spacecraft to land on the moon in more than 50 years, carrying experiments for NASA, the main sponsor. But it came in too fast last Thursday and the foot of one of its six legs caught on the surface, causing it to tumble over, according to company officials.

Based on photos from NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter flying overhead, Odysseus landed within a mile or so of its intended target near the Malapert A crater, just 185 miles or so from the moon's south pole.

The LRO photos from 56 miles up are the only ones showing the lander on the surface, but as little more than a spot in the grainy images. A camera-ejecting experiment by Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, to capture images of the lander as they both descended, was called off shortly before touchdown because of a last-minute navigation issue.

ended up in a small, degraded crater with a 12-degree slope. That's the closest a spacecraft has ever come to the south pole, an area of interest because of suspected frozen water in the permanently shadowed craters there.

NASA, which plans to land astronauts in this region in the next few years, paid Intuitive Machines \$118 million to deliver six experi-(Continued on Page 2)

According to NASA, the lander



LOCAL/NATION

Dinner and awards program

(Continued from Page 1) parable of the seeds in different types of soil. "There's nothing special about the Lemlers," he said. "However, this community - this soil — that our seeds have been planted has made all the difference in our lives, in our families, and in our activities.'

He continued, "It has been an amazing adventure, and I guarantee that as long as the adventure goes, we are not done."

Valero Renewable's plant manager, Mark Brown, echoed a similar community-oriented sentiment in Valero's recognition as Business of the Year. As shared Monday night, Valero has 65 employees at the plant, which produces renewable energy products. Over 80% of the corn used at the plant comes from within a 50-mile radius of the plant.

According to Brown, over 2,500 pounds of food were collected for the Backpack Program in just one week, in addition to numerous volunteer hours. The company has also made significant donations to several nonprofit groups and local initiatives, including more than \$320,000 donated to United Way of Wells County since 2019.

'We're more than just



Valero Renewables of Bluffton was the recipient of Business of the Year. Pictured are representatives from the company, left to right, Amos Wayman, Dennis Addington, Kimberly Barger, Mark Brown, Dawn Donnelly, Bruce Snyder and Roger Sherer. (Photo by Sydney Kent)

a company, we're your neighbors, your friends and your partners in progress," Brown stated. "At Valero, we firmly believe in the principle of being a good neighbor and giving back to the community.'

Each Wells County district honored its own Educator of the Year — Jim Bueter from Bluffton-Harrison, Mark Weinert from Norwell and David Butler from Southern Wells. The three were introduced by Sydney Sheltz-Kempf, the granddaughter of Mike Sailsbery, a former longstanding superintendent at Norwell Community Schools whose family continues to support the awards. Sheltz-Kempf also shared a special connection to one of those honored — she took high school chemistry from Weinert and later obtained several higher education degrees in areas of science.

Also during the evening's festivities, Kevin Pritchard of Ruoff Mortgage was honored as Chamber Ambassador of the Year.

Chamber Executive

Director Erin Prible and Economic Development Executive Director Chad Kline also highlighted the accomplishments of 2023. According to Kline, \$20.3 million had been invested into Wells County in 2023, and 94 jobs had been created.

Additionally, the Chamber added 46 businesses for a total membership of 465. There were also many ribbon cuttings and multiple groundbreakings of new developments.

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Tuesday, February 27, 2024 (24-hour observations at 9:08 p.m. Monday) High: 67; Low: 35; Precipitation: None Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 2.37 feet at 8:45 p.m. Monday

Wells County forecast

Today: A 40% chance of showers and thunderstorms, mainly after 3 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 69. South wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph.



Tonight: Showers and thunderstorms likely, then showers and possibly a thunderstorm after 7 p.m. Low around 42. Breezy, with a southwest wind 15 to 25 mph, with gusts as high as 35 mph. Chance of precipitation is 90%. New rainfall amounts between a quarter and half of an inch possible.

Wednesday: Rain and snow showers likely before 10 a.m., then a chance of snow showers between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Some thunder is also possible. Mostly

cloudy, with a high near 47. Breezy, with a northwest wind 20 to 25 mph, with gusts as high as 35 mph. Chance of precipitation is 60%. Little or no snow accumulation expected.

Wednesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 21.

West wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Thursday: Sunny, with a

Thursday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 28

Friday: Partly sunny, with a high near 46. Friday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 39. Saturday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 59. Saturday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 45. Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 68. Sunday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 52. Monday: A chance of showers. Partly sunny, with a high

near 68. Breezy.

Man sentenced

(Continued from Page 1) the plea agreement.

The court ultimately recommended that Schultz be evaluated for a clinically appropriate substance abuse program. Completion of the program, however, would not result in less time in prison.

The court ordered Schultz's sentence be served consecutively to a pending case in Blackford County also from October 2022. Schultz

was charged with dealing in methamphetamine of 10 or more grams, a Level 2 felony, possession of methamphetamine, a Level 4 felony, unlawful possession of a syringe, a Level 6 felony, and possession of paraphernalia, a Class C misdemeanor.

Schultz faces up to an additional 45 years in prison if convicted on all four charges in this case.

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Mayor Tom Henry says he has late-stage stomach cancer

Kroger and Albertsons merger

(Continued from Page 1)

try face today," Henry Liu, the director of the FTC's Bureau of Competition, said in a statement.

The Biden administration has also shown a willingness to challenge big mergers in court. Last year, the Justice Department sued to block a proposed merger between JetBlue Airways and Spirit Airlines. A federal judge agreed with the administration and blocked the merger last month. The airlines have appealed.

The White House didn't comment Monday, saying it doesn't weigh in on pending litigation. But Jon Donenberg, deputy director of President Biden's National Economic Council, said that Biden supports "fair and vigorous antitrust enforcement."

"When large corporations are not checked by healthy competition, they too often do not pass cost savings on to consumers and exploit their workers,' Donenberg said.

Kroger and Albertsons said customers will likely see higher food prices and store closures if the merger isn't allowed to proceed.

"Albertsons Cos Kroger will ensure our neighborhood supermarkets can better compete with these mega retailers, all while benefitting our customers, associates, and communities," Albertsons said in a prepared statement. "We are disappointed that the FTC continues to use the same outdated view of the U.S. grocery industry it used 20 years ago." "This decision only strengthens larger, non-unionized retailers like Walmart, Costco and Amazon by allowing them to further increase their overwhelming and growing dominance of the grocery industry," Kroger said.

The FTC, which said the proposed deal would be the largest grocery merger in U.S. history, said it would also erase competition for workers, threatening their ability to win higher wages, better benefits and improved working conditions.

Most Albertsons and Kroger employees are members of the United Food and Commercial Workers union, which represents 835,000 grocery workers in the U.S. and Canada. The union voted last year to oppose the merger, saying the companies hadn't been transparent about its potential impact on workers.

Regardless of the next legal steps, we must never forget that Kroger and Albertsons are successful because of these incredibly dedicated workers, and no proposed merger should be allowed to endanger their jobs or their livelihoods," the union said Monday.

The union was also critical of a \$4 billion payout to Albertsons shareholders that was announced as part of the merger deal. Several states, including Washington and California, tried unsuccessfully to block the payment in court, saying it would weaken Albertsons financially. The action by the FTC follows lawsuits filed earlier this year in Colorado and Washington to block the merger. The states that joined the FTC lawsuit Monday are Arizona, California, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon and Wyoming, along with the District of Columbia. Eight of those attorneys general are Democrats; one. Wyoming's, is a Republican. Brian Schwalb, the attorney general of the District of Columbia, said that Kroger-owned Harris Teeter and Albertsons-owned Safeway are now

required to compete for customers in the city. Eliminating that competition would reduce choice at a time when many shoppers are already struggling, he said.

Kroger has promised to invest \$500 million to lower prices as soon as the deal closes. It said it also invested in price reductions when it merged with Harris Teeter in 2014 and Roundy's in 2016. Kroger also promised to invest \$1.3 billion in store improvements at Albertsons as part of the deal.

Last year, C&S Wholesale Grocers agreed to purchase 413 stores and eight distribution centers that Kroger and Albertsons agreed to divest in markets where the two companies' stores overlapped. C&S said it would honor all collective bargaining agreements with workers.

But the FTC said called the store divestiture deal "inadequate," The FTC said C&S — which is mainly a supplier to grocery stores and not an operator — is ill-equipped to deal with the "hodgepodge of unconnected stores, banners and brands" it would get as part of the deal and would not be a robust competitor to Kroger and Alb-

high near 40.

ertsons C&S noted on Monday that it has

been an FTC-approved buyer in prior grocery store sales, and said it has the experience and financial strength to continue investing in the stores it would acquire.

Kroger and Albertsons had hoped to close the deal early this year. But the two companies announced in January that it was more likely to close in the first half of Kroger's fiscal year. Kroger's fiscal second quarter ends Aug. 17.

Kroger shares fell nearly 2% Monday. Albertsons shares rose nearly 1%.

Moon landing mission

(Continued from Page 1) ments to the surface. Other customers also had items on board.

Instead of landing upright, the 14-foot Odysseus came down on its side, hampering communication with Earth. Some antennas were covered up by the toppled lander, and the ones still exposed ended up near the ground, resulting in spotty communications. The solar panels also ended up much closer to the surface than anticipated, less than ideal in the hilly terrain. Even under the best of circumstances, Odysseus only had a week to operate on the surface before the long lunar night set in.

Since the 1960s, only the

U.S., Russia, China, India and Japan have successfully pulled off moon landings, and only the U.S. with crews. Japan's lander ended up on the wrong side, too,

just last month. Despite its slanted landing, Intuitive Machines became the first private business to join the elite group. Another U.S. company, Astrobotic Technology, gave it a try last month, but didn't make it to the moon because of a fuel leak.

Intuitive Machines almost failed, too. Ground teams did not turn on the switch for the lander's navigating lasers before the Feb. 15 liftoff from Florida. The oversight was seus was circling the moon, forcing flight controllers to rely on a NASA laser-navigating device that was on board merely as an experiment.

As it turned out, NASA's test lasers guided Odysseus to a close to bull's-eye landing, resulting in the first moon landing by a U.S. spacecraft since the Apollo program.

Twelve Apollo astronauts walked on the moon from

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1969 through 1972. While NASA went on to put an occasional satellite around the moon, the U.S. did not launch another moon-landing mission until last month. Astrobotic's failed flight was the first under NASA's program to promote commercial deliveries to the moon.

Both Intuitive Machines and Astrobotic hold NASA contracts for more moon landings.

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FORT WAYNE, Ind. (AP) — Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry said Monday he has been diagnosed with late-stage stomach cancer and will begin chemotherapy treatments next week.

The five-term mayor of Indiana's second most populous city announced the diagnosis during a news briefing outside his office Monday afternoon.

'My initial scans have shown that the cancer is currently spreading through my lymph nodes and to other organs in my body. Because of that, my prognosis is not good," Henry said.

He said he plans to continue carrying out his duties as mayor.

"I also have confidence in my ability to carry out my term as your mayor for as long as God permits," Henry said.

Henry, 72, was elected to his fifth term as mayor of the city of about 270,000 residents in November.

Henry pleaded guilty to operating a vehicle while intoxicated endangering a person in November 2022, had his license suspended for 90 days and received a suspended one-year jail sentence. He was arrested the month before with a blood-alcohol level of 0.152, or nearly twice Indiana's legal limit of 0.08.

Henry's wife, Cindy, died at age 67 on Jan. 20 after battling pancreatic cancer for more than a year.





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LOCAL/ AREA



Rep. Matt Pierce, D-Bloomington, opposes legislative interference into a Gary gun lawsuit. (Photo by Monroe Bush)

Key lawmakers once balked at bills affecting active lawsuits. Is the 'default' approach dying?

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ Indiana Capital Chronicle

A common phrase in an Indiana legislative committee room and on a chamber floor "pending litigation" — is increasingly said to little effect.

Open lawsuits are off-limits to some lawmakers, while others consider the unwritten ban on legislative interference an unnecessary barrier to policy goals.

Current and former lawmakers said former Senate President Pro Tem Robert Garton, who held that powerful post from 1980 to 2006, implemented the rule. He killed numerous proposals involving ongoing disputes during his tenure.

But Indiana's current General Assembly has recently taken aim at active lawsuits involving the firearm industry, a Hoosier family with a transgender child, streaming services, lethal injections and more sometimes multiple times.

Does the old rule still hold sway?

"I think (it's) about the same. (Such bills) come up," said Republican Sen. Sue Glick, an attorney who has served in the Senate since 2010.

'I think it's accelerating. There's much more intervention now," said Democrat Rep. Matt Pierce, an attorney first elected to the House of Representatives in 2002.

Gary lawsuit is the latest

Lawmakers have heard hours of testimony and discussion this session on legislation that seeks to end a lawsuit the city of Gary has waged against members of the firearm industry for over 24 years.

It's their third try. Courts let the dispute continue despite attempts to kill it in 2001 and 2015. The city, with the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, filed in 1999

They allege that local gun dealers and major firearms manufacturers - Smith & Wesson, Glock and more – have contributed to the city's high gun violence through negligent business practices, such as not preventing illegal straw purchases.

The defendants and the National Shooting Sports Foundation, their trade organization, say they've followed the law and that the legal fight is preventing them from doing business in the Region and the state.

attempts last session - one lived, the other died — to alter ongoing lawsuits.

In the first, several Hoosier municipalities sued satellite TV and video streaming services like DirectTV and Netflix to extract franchise fees for using equipment in the public right-of-way to transmit programming

Rep. Craig Snow, R-Warsaw, said he was approached by well-known lobbyist Matt Bell on the lawsuit and agreed to insert a provision aimed at ending it into the wideranging House Bill 1454, according to the Times of Northwest Indiana. The proposal became law.

In another, a Hoosier family sued the Indiana Department of Child Services over the removal of their transgender child. House Bill 1407 made it through its originating chamber, but Senate leader Rodric Bray killed it, citing the pending court case.

Bray justified that decision Thursday, telling reporters that case "seemed to be actively moving through" the justice system, and that he'd seen "some value in watching that resolve itself."

Last year, Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita's office crafted an amendment and lawmakers made it law in the closing hours of the session. It determined that advisory ethics opinions are confidential. The move came in the middle of a lawsuit filed against Rokita to release an opinion he sought. A trial judge ordered it to be released but Rokita appealed, the Indiana Citizen reported. And then he turned to the legislature to intervene retroactively. That case is still pending.

Also, the year before Bray was elected Senate leader, lawmakers made headlines when they intervened in a court case over the state's lethal injection suppliers. An antideath penalty lawyer filed a public records request in 2014, and filed suit in 2016 when the Department of Correction (DOC) refused that request.

In a ruling that same year, a trial court ordered the DOC to release the information. But in 2017, lawmakers slipped a confidentiality provision into the budget bill. That didn't end the case, however. A Marion County judge struck down the retroactive

Police Notebook

INCIDENTS

County: Friday, 12:10 p.m., Wells County Jail. Warrant served to Troy Jones at the jail.

Friday, 12:26 p.m., Wells County Jail. Warrant served to Johnathon Okeley at the jail.

Friday, 12:59 p.m., 20 block of Lakeside Drive, Bluffton. Caller reported a dog running loose in neighborhood.

Friday, 2:52 p.m., West 1050 South and South 200 West, Keystone. Report of a pole snapped in half.

Friday, 7:16 p.m., West 800 South and South 300 West, Poneto. Driver cited for speeding 75 in a 55 mph zone.

Friday, 9:23 p.m., 6700 South Meridian Road, Poneto. Report of subjects blowing items up. Large bonfire located, advised to not throw fireworks into the fire.

Friday, 11:05 p.m., Southeast Jeff Road and Ind. 3, Warren. Report of an instant regret from semi truck driver who got stuck in a field after he attempted to turn around in it due to closed road.

Saturday, 7:32 a.m., 3600 South Hoosier Highway, Bluffton. Report of a vehicle slide off.

Saturday, 7:35 a.m., 2500 Girls School Rd., Indianapolis. Transported Julie Ann Dettmer from the women's prison to the Wells County Jail.

Sunday, 12:35 a.m., Ind.

1 and East 400 North, Bluff-

ton. Driver cited for speed-

and East 350 North, Bluff-

Sunday, 1:21 a.m., Ind. 1

Sunday, 1:17 p.m., Tipsy

Sunday, 3:53 p.m., 9400

Sunday, 8:33 p.m., North

Sunday, 8:52 p.m., Wells

Monday, 5:01 a.m., East

Monday, 5:49 a.m., Ind.

and East 1050 North,

ARRESTS

Chad Shawn Sweet,

Jared Isaac Williams,

South 600 West, Warren.

Caller reported someone

hunting on their property.

ing 80 in a 55 mph zone.

dumpsters.

Ossian:

ton. Car vs. deer. Ditch. Report of a semi truck and trailer parked by

Meridian Road and West 100 North, Bluffton. Report of a semi trailer in ditch.

County Jail. Warrant served to Preston Hamilton at the jail.

250 North and Ind. 116, Bluffton. Caller reported that a deer hit their vehicle. Ossian. Report of bags of

trash in roadway. Removed. 50, Kalamazoo, Michigan; criminal trespassing, a Class A misdemeanor.

33, Bluffton; possession of methamphetamine, a Level 6 felony. Noelle Ann Maure, 44,

Fort Wayne; possession of marijuana, a Class B misdemeanor, and possession of paraphernalia, a Class C misdemeanor. Jyler Andrew Morphew,

20, Bluffton; resisting law enforcement, a Level 6 felony, operating a vehicle while intoxicated and reckless driving, both Class C misdemeanors, and operating with a controlled substance in body, a Class C misdemeanor. Bond set at \$7,000.

Adam Richard Baker, 42, Bluffton; battery against a public safety official, a Level 5 felony, and resisting law enforcement, a Level 6 felony. Bond set at \$25,000.

Julie Ann Dettmer, 42, Fort Wayne; possession of a narcotic drug, a Level 6 felony, and possession of paraphernalia, a Class A misdemeanor. No bond set.

Jacob Clinton Taylor, 28, Bluffton; dealing a narcotic drug, a Level 3 felony, possession of a legend drug, a Level 6 felony, resisting law enforcement, a Class A misdemeanor, and possession of paraphernalia, a Class C misdemeanor. No bond set.

Wade Christopher Smelser, 44, Ossian; domestic battery in the presence of a child, a Level 6 felony, and domestic battery, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$50,000.

Matthew King, 43, Theodore, Alabama; battery, a Class B misdemeanor, and criminal mischief, a Class B misdemeanor. Bond set at \$2,000.

Preston Eric Hamilton, 30, Ossian; operating while intoxicated, a Class C misdemeanor, and operating while intoxicated - endangerment, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,500.

Manufacturer-friendly PFAS bill abandoned by Senate committee

By CASEY SMITH Indiana Capital Chronicle Indiana senators ditched a bill on Monday that would have changed the definition of toxic PFAS chemicals to

exempt those that Hoosier manufacturers want to keep using

House Bill 1399 would have carved out more than 5,000 "forever chemicals" from being defined as such by the state and its environmental rules board. The proposal sought to proactively exempt the chemicals in case state or federal regulators try to ban them in the future.

But Sen. Rick Niemev-

there's nothing pending ... it looks like there's nothing that's going to happen in the future."

Niemeyer noted that

rnold Lumber Co. 425 S. Winchester St., Decatur, IN Hours: Mon-Thurs 7AM-5PM Fri 7AM-4:30PM • Sat 7AM-11:30AM 260-724-3108 • Fax 260-724-4505 FABRA IFTAL WALL AND ROOF SYSTEMS Check Us Out on Facebook

PFAS regulation proposals must go through the state's Environmental Rules Board, which he said would take "a minimum" of 18 months.

Gary Mayor Eddie Melton, a Democrat, told a panel of lawmakers last week that House Bill 1235 would — when it comes to the firearm industry — strip the right to access the legal system from all Hoosier communities.

Prominent conservative attorney Jim Bopp and gun-rights attorney Guy Relford countered that local units of government derive their authorities from the state.

"The state giveth; the state can taketh away," Relford told the committee.

Twenty-four years and counting

The Gary lawsuit's long life has emerged as a key detail in the debate over killing it.

"Now, the fact that it's (been nearly) 25 years also tells you everything you want to know about the merits of this case," Bopp said.

He asserted the plaintiff "like(s) the idea of endless discovery.'

Bopp, the National Shooting Sports Foundation's Christopher Lee and firearm supporters blamed the plaintiff for yearslong delays in the case. Melton, Brady Center Senior Litigation Counsel Philip Bengle and others blamed the defendants.

Bray, the Senate's president pro tem, indicated the lengthy timeline played into his decision-making.

"Here, you've got a case that's been going north of 20 years. It's been a frustration, and so that's why there's some interest in engaging in it," he told reporters Thursday.

"If a case is going to move through trial court, go into appellate court and come up with an answer, then we can interpret that answer and decide - and maybe more intelligently decide - whether we need to craft legislation to answer the question or not," he added.

Others said the case's lifespan wasn't key.

"The length doesn't really matter. ... That's not the issue," Sen. Liz Brown, a Republican attorney, said while questioning a witness in committee.

"Maybe the parties are racking up litigation expenses, but as a matter of policy which is what the legislature should be concerning itself with - there's no impact to your average Hoosier of having a lawsuit drag out," Pierce told the Capital Chronicle.

Melton indicated the city of Gary was not spending substantial amounts of money on the case. Lee said one defendant's contractors had estimated it would cost \$12 million to produce documents for discovery, which would add up to \$96 million across the eight defendants; Bengle called the estimates "false" and characterized the discovery requests as simple.

Precedent for legislative engagement The bill comes on the heels of two clause and a split Indiana Supreme Court affirmed the ruling.

"As applied to this case, the General Assembly's passage of the Statute overstepped its authority and violated the Indiana Constitution's Separation of Powers by disturbing a pending case and upsetting this Court's judgment," Judge Sheryl Lynch wrote.

The case for ...

Supporters of the informal tendency against interference say they'd rather react to a ruling, but some opponents contend that litigation itself can be a strategy to keep the General Assembly away from a certain topic.

"It is better to allow the lawsuit to play out," and tweak a statute afterward, Pierce said. But he asserted that parties afraid of a loss increasingly ask lawmakers to end disputes in their favor.

"The only people who get that privilege in the Legislature are the well-connected: the big donors, lobbyists representing associations that play in the political process," Pierce said. "Your average citizen doesn't get to come in and say, 'Hey, I'm getting sued. Could you make it go away by changing the laws?""

Glick, who often cites pending litigation in "no" votes on legislation, said ongoing disputes are the justice system's "province."

"It would be like the courts ... making a declaratory judgment on a bill that's pending in the legislature," she told the Capital Chronicle. "We haven't resolved it. We don't know what it's going to look like at the end. So, you know, they're a little premature in getting involved in something that may or may not pass in that in that form. That's what we're doing in terms of their court case.'

Glick indicated it would take an "emergency" like the pandemic to get her to agree to interference.

Both Glick and Pierce are attorneys. ... And against

Others view those lawsuits with more suspicion.

David Long, a Republican who served as Senate leader from Garton's departure in 2006 to the end of his own tenure in 2018, said he felt a blanket ban was "wrong."

"All you need to do if you don't want certain legislation is to file a lawsuit on the subject, and use the courts as a weapon ... to make sure that your issue doesn't come before the Legislature," said Long, who is an attorney.

Parties could use that to their benefit in ways that could harm state interests, he added. And he defended interference advancing those interests, like the lethal injection confidentiality provision.

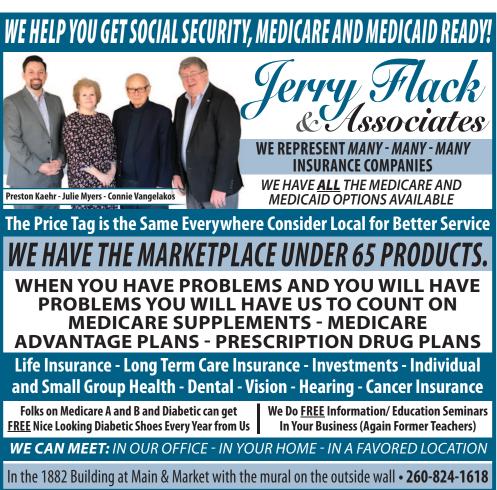
er, R-Lowell, who chairs the Senate Environmental Affairs Committee, said Monday that he viewed the bill "as being a little proactive."

Niemeyer said he had several "extensive conversations" with Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) Commissioner Brian Rockensuess and "came to the conclusion that we have nothing that's out there that's proposed right now to the rules board or anyplace else." No IDEM representatives spoke publicly about the bill, however.

"I understand (manufacturers) want that certainty - they need that especially with the things that this chemical is involved in, and it does a lot for our citizens of this state," he said. "But



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Congress needs to represent us. But it also needs to act

Back in January, you might have noticed a story from Oklahoma about James Lankford, that state's senior US senator. Lankford, a Republican, was spearheading his caucus's negotiations with Democrats over the country's border policies. This made GOP activists back home unhappy, and at a weekend meeting, members of the state party approved a resolution condemning Lankford and vowing to withhold their support until he ended nego-Hoosier tiations.

I get that people can legitimately disagree over policy. But condemning someone



Lee Hamilton

Opinions for negotiating in Congress? That's what Congress is all about! Let's begin with this simple point: Yes, we send people to Congress to represent us, but that's only half of the reason they're there. The other half is that it's their responsibility to make hard decisions on behalf of the American people and to help us meet the challenges

we face. In our system, it's the people we elect—in this case, Congress and the President-who do that. Thankfully, no one else can swoop in and do it for them.

I say "thankfully" because one of the things that makes their work so difficult is the first part of their responsibilities: to represent their constituents. They're our voices in the halls of power-and if you think about the broad expanse of this country and the diversity of its people, its cities and small towns, its counties and its states, you can understand why the ability to seek common ground and to negotiate is so crucial. Without it, huge swaths of the American people lose their voice and their representation. You could argue, in fact, that negotiation and compromise lie at the very heart of the American experiment with democracy.

Yet they're just part of what needs to happen. The other part of what's required from Congress is to make the country work.

As we've seen over the past decade or more—and certainly so far this year-this is extremely tough when the US is as politically divided as it is now. And it's especially tough when one of the chambers has a strong faction of members who put ideological purity ahead of taking action on the country's problems and responsibilities. House Republicans' intractability on the border and on aid to Ukraine and Israel almost certainly plays well at home in their GOP-dominated districts, but it weakens the US's ability to meet the moment. It means that Congress is keeping the country from doing what needs to be done.

It's at moments like these that I'm reminded of one of my favorite statues in the Capitol. It's of another Oklahoman, Will Rogers, and it stands in the secondfloor corridor between the rotunda and the House chamber. The story-passed from generation to generation of members of Congress—is that he requested it be placed there so he could keep an eye them. Capitol officials say the location was actually chosen by the sculptor because it had the best light, but I'm with tradition here: Congress needs watching over by ordinary Americans. And if it's not doing its job—if it's keeping the US gridlocked and unable to act wisely and forcefully as needed-then its members need to hear from us.

I believe strongly in representative democracy. I think it's one of the great ideas developed by humankind and given form, in part, by the US. But the more I watch it in action, the more I'm impressed by how difficult it is to make it work. Giving the multitude of Americans their voice while at the same time crafting policies that can get a legislative majority and move the ball forward takes a huge amount of effort by people who are working hard to find common ground. This requires that members of Congress square their shoulders and step up to their responsibilities-whoever's trying to knock them off their path.



Despite anticipation of a Trump nomination, Super Tuesday demands to be heard

Donald Trump's handlers handled him well Saturday night. By sending him out for his victory remarks minutes after South Carolina's polls closed, they prevented him from emitting the sort of long, bilious snarl that was his response to hearing, immediately after he won in New Hampshire, Nikki Haley's feisty vow to continue competing

After basking in the adoration of South Carolina's officialdom, arrayed behind him like third-graders singled out as teacher's pets, Trump departed before he learned the fact that the high voter turnout had foretold: His win was less "gigantic" than he had promised. In November 2016, he carried South Carolina with 54.9 percent and in 2020 with 55.1. On Saturday, in a primary in which mostly Republicans participated, he received only 59.8 percent.

In the state that has the nation's most rapidly growing population, the two places where the electorate most resembles the nation's are Charleston and Columbia. There, Haley received 62 percent and 58 percent, respectively. It is likely that a significant number of Trumpkins value the prospective satisfaction of defeating Joe Biden more than the immediate fun of being tribal together. They might yet recognize that Trump vs. Biden would be a close call, whereas Haley vs. Biden would be a landslide for the former, with down-ballot consequences that might produce Republican control of Congress.

Brookings Institution scholars William A. Galston and Elaine Kamarck write at the Progressive Policy Institute that in the 17 elections from 1920 to 1984, 10 winners achieved a popular-vote victory margin of at least 10 points, and five achieved at least 20 points. In the nine elections from 1988 to 2020, no winner had even a 10-point victory margin. This year, Haley probably would achieve such a margin. And it is highly probable that Trump would lose the popular vote for a third time.

Furthermore, it is pertinent that in 2020 women

must notice that he is the party's establishment. Only one Republican member of Congress (South Carolina Rep. Ralph Norman) publicly supports Haley. For most of the rest, who call to mind Theodore Roosevelt's scrumptious description of spines carved from bananas, his whims are commands (regarding Ukraine, the border, the budget, etc.).

They might not understand the significance of the low ceiling above the hard floor of Trump's support. Analyst Charlie Cook says Trump's approval numbers while president moved within a narrow 15-point band: His highest Gallup rating was 49 percent, and his lowest was 34. Of Trump's nine elected predecessors (excluding Gerald Ford), those with the smallest range between highs and lows were John Kennedy at 27 points; Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon and Barack Obama with 31-point spreads; Ronald Reagan with a 32-point range; Bill Clinton with 37. The widest spreads were Jimmy Carter (47), George H.W. Bush (60) and George W. Bush (65). Trump was comparatively frozen, and, unlike all those predecessors, constantly below 50 percent.

What Cook calls "the full-blown tribalism" that has made Republicans and Democrats "virtually monolithic" in their support of presidential nominees and presidents of their parties is of recent vintage. And is not forever, because nothing is.

Republicans (and others eligible to participate) in the 46 states not yet heard from might experience a mind-opening excitement if on Super Tuesday (March 5) Haley continues to provoke Trump's annoying insistence that their opinions are nullities, given his inevitability. If so, his handlers will be hard put to contain his off-putting petulance that constantly threatens his tenuous hold on his composure.

The political air is thick with the theory that



George Will

But it also requires that we, as ordinary Americans, give them room to make things work. Not condemn them for trying.

Lee Hamilton is a distinguished scholar with the IU School of Lugar Global and International Studies. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.



By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, Feb. 27, the 58th day of 2024. There are 308 days left in the year.

Ťoday's Highlight in History: On Feb. 27, 1973, members of the American Indian Movement occupied the hamlet of Wounded Knee in South Dakota, the site of the 1890 massacre of Sioux men, women and children. (The occupation lasted until May.)

On this date:

In 1807, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born in Portland, Maine.

In 1922, the Supreme Court, in Leser v. Garnett, unanimously upheld the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed the right of women to

vote. In 1933, Germany's parliament building, the Reichstag, was gutted by fire; Chancellor Adolf Hitler, blaming the Communists, used the fire to justify suspending civil liberties.

In 1939, the Supreme Court, in National Labor Relations Board v. Fansteel Metallurgical Corp., effectively outlawed sit-down strikes.

In 1942, the Battle of the Java Sea began during World War II; Imperial Japanese naval forces scored a decisive victory over the Allies.

In 1951, the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution, limiting a president to two terms of office, was ratified.

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> Holly Gaskill, Editor Mark Miller, Opinion Page Editor

outvoted men by 4 to 6 percent. According to the AP VoteCast survey, women favored Biden 55 percent to 44 percent; according to Edison data, 57 percent to 42 percent. Women provided Biden's narrow margin of victory.

Like cold pizza washed down by flat beer, Trump, who once upon a time was edgy, is the epitome of staleness. Pity him: It is difficult to be transgressive when there are no remaining norms to transgress. Being an acolvte in the Trump cult used to be thrillingly naughty, a rude gesture against the Republican "establishment." Now even the least alert Trumpkins

Trump's nomination is something to be anticipated with certainty and accepted philosophically. He is, however, a blimp filled with two lighter-than-air gases - the charisma of wealth, and an aura of invincibility among Republicans. He has lied ludicrously about the former; Haley can continue to dissipate the latter.

On Aug. 11, 1951, the Brooklyn Dodgers led the New York Giants by 13.5 games with more than two-thirds of the season gone. But the Dodgers experienced the World Series sitting on their sofas.

georgewill@washpost.com.

Too many corporations, like universities, have lost their way

Universities are not alone among our institutions that have lost their way. How about America's corporations, which now seem to think social justice is their job, beside efficiently delivering goods and services to the American public?

In a recent panel discussion at the Bipartisan Policy Institute, Jamie Dimon, chairman and CEO of JPMorgan, the nation's largest bank, rang the alarm about the nation's debt.

He noted what is already widely known — that federal debt now equals 100 percent of GDP, on its way to 130 percent of GDP by 2035.

We're headed for a cliff at "60 miles an hour," said Dimon. But this is not new.

In 2018, for instance, an opinion piece in The Washington Post authored by four distinguished economists from the Hoover Institution

Michael Boskin, John Cochrane, John Cogan and John B. Taylor, along with former Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury George Shultz – announced "A debt crisis is on the horizon.

They pointed to the enormous burden and risk to our budget of the then debt burden, which stood at \$15 trillion, 76 percent of GDP. Now we're at \$34 trillion and 100 percent of GDP.

At the end of 2008, debt stood at 43 percent of GDP.

It is good that the chairman of the largest bank in the country is waking



up. But where has he been and is he really waking up?

Per OpenSecrets, which tracks and reports political spending, in the most recent political cycle, 2023/2024, 65 percent of JPMorgan's political contributions went to Democrats, and their contributions to "liberal groups" were greater than contributions to "conservative groups" by a margin of 10-to-1.

The Business Roundtable is a Washington, D.C.-based association of "more than 200 chief executive officers of America's leading companies ... that support one in four American jobs and almost a quarter of U.S. GDP.'

In 2019, Jamie Dimon served as their chairman, and under his leadership, they made a significant change.

It has always been understood that the responsibility of any corporation is to serve the interests of its shareholders — the owners of the company.

Economist Milton Friedman wrote in his famous book "Capitalism and Freedom," first published in 1962, that corporations have one responsibility — to maximize profitability for its shareholders.

"Few trends could so thoroughly undermine the very foundations of our free society as the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their stockholders as possible," wrote Friedman.

But in 2019 the Business Roundtable did exactly this. They announced that they were abandoning primacy

of serving shareholders as the core corporate responsibility and that shareholders would now be viewed as just one group of "stakeholders," alongside "customers, employees, suppliers" and "communities."

What happened to private property? Corporate CEOs work for the owners, the shareholders.

Private property is what sets a free society apart from socialism.

Dimon noted, "The American dream is alive but fraying. ... These modernized principles reflect the business community's unwavering commitment to continue to push for an economy that serves all Americans."

If the American dream is "fraying," it is because of departure from the principles that define a free society, upon which our great country emerged. Economic freedom, private property, personal responsibility and creativity are the source of our success, not of our failures.

Blurring the lines between the private and the public, no one knows what their job is - government, corporations, universities.

Government has exploded by trying to do what individuals should be doing for themselves.

The result of all the efficiencies is slowdown of growth. The victims are the poor, not high-earning CEOS.

As our country sinks under a tsunami of spending and debt, hopefully the CEO of the nation's largest bank, and CEOs of all our corporations, will wake up that loss of freedom, not too much freedom, is what is hurting our nation.



LIFESTYLES





With encouragement from Wells County's Department of Child Services a little Food Pantry has been established in Ossian outside Welches All Vehicle Repair. The pantry was assembled by Welches employees and was painted by Jen Burns with the message "for I was hungry and you fed me." Announcing that the pantry is open for either the taking of food or the stocking of it were, left to right, Tom and Angie Vachon, representing the Family Protection Team, Seth St. Myers and Keegan Mautz, Welches employees, and Joe Welches. (Photo by Barbara Barbieri)

Little food pantry opens in Ossian

By BARBARA BARBIERI

Residents of the northern part of Wells county now have access to a little Food Pantry, located outside Welches All Auto Repair in Ossian, thanks to the encouragement of the Child Protection Team from the Department of Child Services of Wells County.

This is the fourth pantry they have assisted with setting up with the first one set up in 2022 behind their office at 221 West Market St. It is called Mandi's Pantry as it was established in memory of DSC Family Case Manager Mandi.

The other two are located beside the First Reformed Church and by the

Park Community Church by Washington Park, both in Bluffton.

Community members are encouraged to help stock the pantries if they are able. Non-perishable food items, preferably items that can provide a meal to families are welcome at all of the pantries.



Honoring Tri Kappa Week

Members of the Beta Phi chapter of Tri Kappa have gifted four county organizations with checks totaling \$1,275, as they have been celebrating Tri Kappa Week (Feb. 19-23). Holding checks left to right are Jolin Whicker (Boys & Girls Club), Marielle Lael (Library's summer reading program), Pam Blessing (Creative Arts project) and Bonnie Ramsey (Bluffton Parks Dept.). Other groups presented checks have included: Wells on Wheels, Backpack program and teacher mini-grants. All the donated funds come from the group's selling of Street Fair shirts and their annual sale of pecans and other nuts. (Photo provided)

Live radio show at Pulse **Opera House** The Invisible Man: A

Live Radio Show" will be on stage at the Pulse Opera House in Warren on March 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10.

This script was developed and performed by actors from various Star Trek casts. The Pulse cast will include: Priscilla Alter (Rebecca), Shaun Berkey (Bartender), Jon Cole (Griffin), Ben Kiser (Teddy), Michael Blaugher (Peter), J.J. Leak (Mrs. Hall), David Parker (Marvel), Steve Rodenberger (Kemp), David Schultz (Narrator/Inspector), April Smith (Rebecca's mother) and Ken Zuk (Mayor).

Admission is \$15 adults and \$5 for those 12 and younger. Curtain times are at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday with a 2 p.m. matinee on Saturdays and 4 p.m. on Sundays.

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Zanesville News

by Melba Edwards

Things are about the same as the Coffee Cafe at the Zanesville Community Church of God is open to all on weekdays from 7:30 to 10 a.m.

The area Men's Lenten Breakfast will be held at the Fairview Church of God at 8 a.m. on Saturday, March 2. All men and boys are welcome to attend these meetings. The church is just a few miles east of Indianapolis Road on Yoder Road 1 mile north of Zanesville.

Please be in prayer for those who are having health problems.

I am sad to report that John Holbrook has passed away. John had many friends and he was a go-to for those who needed help.

I first knew him when our son Doug needed the mobile home that sits next to our house moved here from Ossian. From then on Kenny and I were friends of John and Charlotte. When our daughter moved here to town with her family, he helped out as granddaughter Anna was still battling cancer. The mobile home was moved in late 1973 so the Holbrook family has been here as long as the Edwards, as we moved back in 1973. Our son Jim and their son Mike have been good friends.

John spent lots of time at Rich's Restaurant heckling the waitresses and just talking (his favorite thing). He always asked me what was going on in town as he considered Zanesville his home.

Now he is at home where he has longed to be with his wife Charlotte. The are both buried at Hoverstock here.

March 9 and 10 is Indiana Maple Weekend. This is the weekend when maple syrup producers show and educate the general public on how maple syrup is made. The Sheltons, south of here on the west side of Marzane Road, are currently tapping their trees. I know of several others near here that also tap trees.

Jefferson Homemakers hold February meeting

Mary Ann Ripperger tine". opened the meeting thanking Margie Huss and Charlotte Steffen for hosting.

Marjana Huss gave the inspiration by Mother Teresa "A Simple Path."

Roll Call was answered by 11 ladies stating what is their favorite candy.

Mary Ann read of the history of Valentine's Day. It was first celebrated in the United States in the 1980's.

Sharon Jump gave a Health and Safety Lesson on Heart Disease. She gave the risk factors and causes of heart disease.

Mary Ann stated that the name for February Moon was Snow Moon.

In absence of Carol Baker, Mary Ann read the January minutes. One correction was made of the date of the meeting. All approved with the one change.

Treasurer's Report was given by Margie Huss. No questions were asked and approved. Club collection was on the word "Valen-

Mary Ann then read many cute things that make you "Feel Old". We all could relate and had a good laugh.

Cards were sent to Lois Neuenschwander, Liz Bledsoe, Martha Harris, and Judy Kaehr.

Birthdays of the month were celebrated by Liz Bledsoe, Marjana Huss, and Sharon Jump.

Anniversaries were celebrated by Sharon Friend and Carol Lochtefeld.

It was mentioned that St. Al's would be having their fish fry on March 8. It is the time to watch for many fish fries.

Mary Ann passed around the Prersidential Pointer's from the new IEHA website for the girls to look at. She explained about the new website and how much better it is now. It is IEHAfamily.org.

Margie and Charlotte presented a plate of officers starting in July. President-Mary Ann Ripperger, vicepresident Charlotte Steffen, secretary Sharon Jump, and treasurer Marjana Huss. All were in favor of the plate of officers.

Mary Ann reminded everyone this was the last day to sign up for the District Meeting held in Adams County. Three from our club will be attending.

It was decided that our responsibility for the Homemaker's Festival is door prizes. It was decided that we would purchase flowers.

Forms for the County Extension Office was filled out to be turned in by March.

Mary Ann stated she would not be at the next meeting as she and her daughter were going to Ireland and Sharon Jump would be in charge of that meeting.

Mary Ann gave a lesson on Stress Management.

Next meeting will be March 13 at the Ossian Library at 1 p.m. Anyone is welcome to attend.

www.pulseoperahouse.org. or call 260-375-017.

Gaven Drew's play to debut March 2 in FW

"Equals—A New Play" will have a debut on Saturday, March 2 at The Local Archive in Fort Wayne.

Authors of the production are Dakota Norman and Gavin Thomas Drew, who was active once as both a performer and a director for Wells Community Theater (now Creative Arts Theatre). The one-man play will feature Drew in the role written about his life as an actor who becomes deaf and finds a new way to pursue his theater passion.

Drew, who can now hear with a cochlear implant, currently is artistic director for the Summit City Music. The one night presentation will serve as a fund raiser for Summit City Music Theatre in the small venue to allow the audience to become a part of the story.

Admission is \$25 adults and \$20 for students and seniors. The Local Archive is located a 118 W. Columbia St., Suite 201 (door near Utopian Coffee + Kitchen.

The production is being recorded in hopes of getting community theaters to bring it to their audiences.

Coffee concerts at Crescendo

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: 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.

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Cody Bellinger returns to Cubs on an \$80 million, 3-year deal

By JAY COHEN AP Baseball Writer

Cody Bellinger is going back to the Chicago Cubs, agreeing to an \$80 million, three-year contract, a person familiar with the deal told The Asso-

ciated Press.



seasons, according to the person who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity Sunday because the agreement was pending a physical. Bellinger is set to make \$30 million this

The slugger can opt out of the deal after

each of the first two

Cody Bellinger

year, and then \$30 million in 2025 if he stays with Chicago and \$20 million in 2026 if he doesn't opt out of the contract.

Bellinger was among five significant free agents represented by Scott Boras who went into spring training without agreements. Pitchers Blake Snell and Jordan Montgomery, third baseman Matt Chapman and designated hitter J.D. Martinez remain on the market.

It was a much different experience than last offseason, when Bellinger finalized a \$17.5 million, one-year deal with the Cubs in December 2022. He then declined his end of a \$25 million mutual option for 2024 and rejected a \$20,325,000 qualifying offer from Chicago after a resurgent performance.

Healthy again after years of injuries, Bell-

inger regained the form that made him one of baseball's biggest stars at the beginning of his career with the Los Angeles Dodgers. He hit a career-best .307 with 26 homers, 97 RBIs and 20 steals in 130 games in 2023.

The 28-year-old Bellinger helped power the Cubs into playoff contention before the team faded in September. He had 48 RBIs in one 45-game stretch from Aug. 1 to Sept. 19

"He's part of this club. He's one of us. There was a little void in here, for sure, before he came back," pitcher Kyle Hendricks told reporters at the team's spring training facility in Arizona. "Just seeing him

in here, man, getting a hug, smiling. I know he'll be back to work soon. But yeah, just seeing his body, seeing his face in here, was just amazing.

Bellinger also gave Chicago a lift with his defensive versatility. He won a Gold Glove in 2019 for his work in center, and he also plays a solid first base. He likely will be in center on opening day this year, giving top prospect Pete Crow-Armstrong more time to develop.

"Just the impact that (Bellinger) had on our group last year from a personality standpoint, from a versatility standpoint, and then obviously his ability to produce at a high level really made our team and put ourselves in position to have some success last year," shortstop Dansby Swanson said in Arizona. "And that's something that we've been looking forward to being able to get back."

Bellinger's rejuvenation was greeted with some skepticism from the analytics crowd. He ranked in the 22nd percentile among big leaguers in average exit velocity and in the 10th percentile in hard-hit rate in 2023 - hewas in the 83rd and 86th percentiles, respectively, when he won NL MVP in 2019.

Bellinger was selected by Los Angeles in the fourth round of the 2013 amateur draft.

His father, Clay, was a utilityman who appeared in 183 big league games, mostly with the New York Yankees.

Cody Bellinger broke into the majors in 2017, hitting 39 homers for the Dodgers and winning the NL Rookie of the Year award. He was the NL MVP in 2019, batting .305 with a career-best 47 homers and 115 RBIs in 156 games.

The Dodgers won the 2020 World Series, and Bellinger played a key role in their October success. He hit four homers and drove in 13 runs in 18 postseason games as Los Angeles won it all for the first time since 1988.

After that stellar season in 2019, injuries became an issue. Bellinger had surgery on his right shoulder in November 2020. He hit a career-low .165 in 95 games in 2021.

Bellinger was let go by the Dodgers in November 2022 after he hit .210 with 19

on a court." homers, 150 strikeouts and a .654 OPS Scheyer - who initially misspoke Saturday when in 144 games in his final season with the team. he said Filipowski hurt his ankle — said Monday that the preseason Associated

Barnes records 4th triple-double, of the season, Raptors beat Pacers

By MICHAEL MAROT AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) - Toronto Raptors coach Darko Rajakovic promised his players a tasty reward when they finally strung together a three-

game winning streak.

Barnes had 21 points, 12 rebounds and 12 assists on a night seven Raptors scored in double figures. Rookie Gradey Dick had 18 points and made two key 3s late to break open the game while matching his season-high with four 3s.

"This is just the beginning, Rajakovic said, referring to Dick. "He's going to have good games, he's going to have bad games, but he needs to continue winning in those situations, continue to learn and get better." Bennedict Mathurin kept the Pacers within reach by matching his career high with 34 points and nine rebounds. Twotime All-Star Pascal Siakam tormented his former team with 27 points, nine rebounds and six assists. Indiana acquired Siakam in a January trade. But with the league's best shooting team and All-Star guard Tyrese Haliburton having an off-night, the Pacers struggled. Haliburton had nine points and seven assists while (Continued on Page 7)

High School Calendar

TUESDAY, FEB. 27

BOYS BASKETBALL: (Sectional) Southern Wells vs. Southwood at Southern Wells High School, 6 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 28

BOYS BASKETBALL: (Sectional) Bluffton vs. Bishop Luers at Bluffton High School, 7:30 p.m.; Norwell vs. Peru at Mississinewa High School, 7:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEB. 29 No events scheduled. FRIDAY, MARCH 1

TRACK & FIELD (CO-ED): Bluffton at Hoosier State Relays (IWU Troyer Fieldhouse), 5:30 p.m. SATURDAY, MARCH 2

No events scheduled **MONDAY, MARCH 4** No events scheduled. **TUESDAY, MARCH 5** No events scheduled. WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6 No events scheduled. **THURSDAY, MARCH 7** No events scheduled.

Duke's John Scheyer wants the ACC to implement measures to prevent court-storming

ketball conferences do for a first offense — such as the Southeastern Confer-

ence issuing a \$100,000

penalty on LSU after its

fans stormed the

court following

last week's win

over a ranked

Kentucky team.

no plans to issue

of the situation

told The Asso-

ciated Press on

Monday. The

person spoke to

The ACC has

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

Duke coach Jon Scheyer wants the Atlantic Coast Conference to implement measures to

prevent courtstorming after star big man Kyle Filipowski was hobbled following a collision with a fan during a weekend loss at Wake Forest. Scheyer said

Monday that

Filipowski was

"a little bit sore'

following the

"Absolutely

shouldn't wait until next

year, something should be

done right now," Scheyer

said during the weekly

league coaches teleconfer-

ence, adding: "At the end

of the day, players and

coaches and officials are

the only people that belong

Press All-American didn't

require any type of diag-

nostic internal imaging for

his knee to search for a

structural injury. Filipow-

ski didn't have a signifi-

cant limp when he spoke

to a few reporters after the

game, though his status

wasn't immediately clear

for the 10th-ranked Blue

Devils' game Wednesday

midcourt.

a fine to Wake Forest, a person with knowledge

John Scheyer

we

the AP on condiincident, which left him tion of anonymity because the league hasn't comsporting a bag of ice on his knee after banging his mented publicly beyond commissioner Jim Phillips' right leg into the leg of a statement Saturday night. fan running by him toward

Still, the image of Filipowski having to be helped off the court amid the chaos only added to the discussion on the dangers of court-storming in a season with multiple run-ins, the highest-profile one being when Iowa star Caitlin Clark was accidentally knocked down by a fan running onto the court after a January upset loss.

Alabama athletics director Greg Byrne went as far as saying he thinks teams should have to forfeit in scenarios like the Duke-Wake Forest game.

'You have two kids run out there, no, but when you have a sustained rush like what just happened the other day at Wake, you lose the game," Byrne told reporters in Birmingham on Monday. "That will get people to stop.'

Purdue coach Matt Painter raised concerns about court-storming security measures after a loss at Nebraska, less than two weeks before Clark's collision. And on Sunday, after his Boilermakers had beaten Michigan, Painter reiterated those concerns while noting that court-storming fans can simply overwhelm security measures set out in pregame plans.

AP. "You know Duke's coming to town or you know Kansas is coming to town or the (then-) No. 1-ranked team in the country, UConn, is coming to town. If they get upset, it's probably going to happen.

"Well, they probably should make a rule so it doesn't happen, period. Just period."

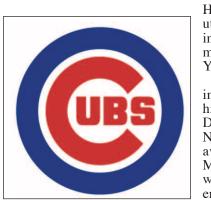
Painter went on to say: "The NCAA has got to step in here and show some leadership on this. Because what's happened to Caitlin Clark, what happened to Filipowski, should not hap-pen."

It's a position echoed by Kansas coach Bill Self, who said the court-storming at Wake Forest "was one of the quickest ones I've ever seen."

"That happened so fast," Self told a small group of reporters Monday. "And if you don't have the proper security in a situation like that, it would be hard to imagine that fans do not come into contact with visiting players, which could lead obviously to injuries or maybe legal things down the road. I would hope they could totally do away with them.'

To Self's point, Scheyer pointed to the risk of confrontation, noting that Jared McCain had a fan run onto the court and stop right in front of the freshman as McCain tried to exit the court Saturday.

"It would be wrong of me not to speak up for all the student-athletes that can be put in this position," Scheyer said. And something needs to change now before something serious happens. Go back and look at Jared McCain, and the position he was in when that game ended. Where the kid could've punched him in the face, he could've punched the kid for his own safety.



Now it's time to pay up.

With All-Star Scottie Barnes logging his fourth triple-double of the season and RJ Barrett scoring 24 points in Thursday night's 130-122 victory, players responded to their longest winning streak of the season by chanting "piz-za."

"I told them that when we won three straight I'd

take them to dinner," Rajakovic explained outside a joyous locker room. "But I told them this team's so humble, we could have pizza."

Whatever the meal preference, this young team again looked hungry - extending its post-All-Star break record to 3-0.

And it came with a pretty typical menu, too.



Mid-American Conference invites UMass to rejoin league in 2025-26

By RALPH D. RUSSO **AP College Sports Writer**

The Mid-American Conference is inviting UMass to join as a full member, starting in 2025, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press on Monday.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because neither the school nor the MAC had confirmed the move. The person said the MAC's university presidents voted to approve the invitation on Monday, and the school is expected to accept after weeks of talks between the parties.

The Minutemen are currently an independent in football and compete in the Atlantic 10 in most other sports, excluding men's hockey, which is part of Hockey East.

The Athletic first reported the MAC was inviting UMass.

UMass is the only A-10 school that plays football at the highest tier of Division I, known as the Bowl Subdivision.

The Minutemen had a football-only membership in the MAC when the school first moved up from the Championship Subdivision to FBS from 2012-15. They won only eight games during that time and were essentially booted from the conference.

They have operated as a football independent since, but have yet to win more than four games in a season. The addition of UMass gives the MAC 13 full members, mostly located in Ohio and Michigan.

With Army set to join the American Athletic Conference in 2024, UMass' move would decrease the number of FBS independents to two: Notre Dame and UConn.

against an eight-win Louisville team.

Scheyer followed his postgame call to ban courtstorming with a plea for the ACC to put such a policy in place now, even with Duke down to four regularseason games and only one on the road (at North Carolina State on March 4).

The ACC requires member schools to have detailed safety procedures in place for managing court-stormings. But it historically has not levied fines, something four of the six major bas-

"But also watch the weather, because when they say it's snowing, you've got to be ready for the snow," Painter told the

"When you get a student or a fan that close to you, face to face, 2 seconds after the game ends – we'll regret that as college athletics, college basketball, if we don't do something to prevent that from happening in the future."

José DeLeón, former St. Louis Cardinals pitcher, dies at 63

SANTO DOMINGO – Dominican Republic (AP) — José DeLeón, a major league pitcher for 13 seasons who led the National League in strikeouts for the St. Louis Cardinals in 1989, has died. He was 63.

Los Leones del Escogido, DeLeón's team in the Dominican Winter League, said he died Sunday evening at Cedimat hospital in Santo Domingo. The team said DeLeón had health issues without giving further information.

DeLeón was 86-119 with a 3.76 ERA in 264 starts and 151 relief appearances for Pittsburgh (1983-86), the Chicago White Sox (1986-87, 1993-95), St. Louis (1988-92), Philadelphia (1992-93) and Montreal (1995). The righthander struck out 1,594 in 1,897 1/3 innings.

He topped the NL with 201 strikeouts in 1989 and and tied for the NL lead with 19 losses in 1985 and 1990.

Selected by the Pirates in the third round of the 1979 amateur draft, DeLeón made his major league debut on July 23, 1983, striking out nine over eight innings in a 5-2 win over visiting San Francisco.

DeLeón finished 7-3 with a 2.83 ERA in 15 starts and was seventh in voting for NL Rookie of the Year, an award won by the New York Mets' Darryl Strawberry.

DeLeón was traded to the Chicago White Sox in July 1986 for Bobby Bonilla, who earned four consecutive All-Star Game selections with Pittsburgh from 1988-1991.

DeLeón made his only postseason appearances in 1993, allowing one run over 4 2/3 innings in a pair of AL Championship Series relief appearances against Toronto.



News-Banner Scoreboard

BASKETBALL High School

Monday Boys' Scores No Games.

College

- AP Poll 1. Houston (24-3) 2. Purdue (25-3) 3. LCorp (25-3)
- 3. UConn (25-3)
- 4. Tennessee (21-6) 5. Marquette (21-6) 6. Arizona (21-6)
- Kansas (21-6)
- 8. Iowa St. (21-6)

Iowa St. (21-6)
 Iowa St. (21-6)
 North Carolina (21-6)
 Duke (21-6)
 Auburn (21-6), 12. Creighton
 (20-8), 13. Illinois (20-7), 14/ Alabama
 (19-8), 15. Baylor (19-8), 16. Kentucky
 (19-8), 17. Saint Mary's (23-6), 18.
 South Carolina (22-5), 19. Washington
 t. (21-7), 20. San Diego State (21-7),
 21. Dayton (21-5), 22. Utah St. (22-5),
 23. Gonzaga (22-6), 24. Florida (19-8), 25. South Florida (21-5).
 Receiving Votes: BYU 93, Texas
 Tech 65, TCU 46, Clemson 45, Wake
 Forest 44, Wisconsin 42, Nevada 25,
 Colorado St. 20, New Mexico 10, FAU

Colorado St. 20, New Mexico 10, FAU 8, Nebraska 7, Oklahoma 7, Mississippi St. 5, Appalachian St 3, North-western 1, Boise St. 1, Indiana St 1, McNeese St. 1, Loyola Chicago 1.

Big Ten Standings

- 1. Purdue (14-3) 2. Illinois (11-5) T3. Northwestern (10-6) T3. Wisconsin (10-6) 5. Nebraska (10-7) 6. Michigan St. (9-8) 7 Minnesota (8-8)
- T8. Iowa (8-9) T8. Penn St. (8-9)
- 10. Maryland (7-10) T11. Indiana (6-10)
- T11. Rutgers (6-10) 13. Ohio St. (6-11)
- 14. Michigan (3-11)

Men's Basketball Scores Monday, Feb. 26 EAST

Drexel 70, Delaware 60 Norfolk St. 85, Morgan St. 82 SOUTH

Nicholls 92, Incarnate Word 82 North Carolina 75, Miami 71 MIDWEST

Kansas St. 94, West Virginia 90, OT

Women's Basketball Scores 1. South Carolina (21-0) 2. Ohio St. (24-3)

- 3. Texas (26-3) 4. Stanford (24-4)
- 4. Stanford (24-4)
 5. Virginia Tech (23-4)
 6. Iowa (24-4)
 7. USC (21-5)
 8. UCLA (21-5)
 9. LCLA (21-5)

6. GOLA(24-4) 10. UConn (24-5) 11. Oregon St. (22-5). 12. North Carolina St. (23-5), 13. Colorado (20-6), 14. Indiana (22-4), 15. Kansas St. (a) 14. Indiana (22-4), 15. Kansas St. (23-5), 16. Gonzaga (28-2), 17. Notre Dame (21-6), 18. Utah (20-8), 19. Syracuse (23-5), 20. Oklahoma (20-7), 21. Baylor (21-6), 22. Louisville (22-7), 23. Creighton (22-4), T24. UNLV (24-2), T24. West Virgina (22-5)
 Receiving Votes: Fairfield 49, Duke 33, Princeton 7, North Carolina 5, Florida St. 3, Columbia 2, Mississiopi 1.

sippi 1.

Big Ten Standings 1. Ohio St. (15-1) 12. Iowa (13-3) 12. Indiana (13-3) 4. Nebraska (11-6) 5. Michigan St. (10-6) 16. Michigan (8-8) 16. Maryland (8-8) 178. Penn St. (7-9) 18. Illinois (7-9) 10. Wisconsin (6-10) 10. Wisconsin (6-10) T11. Minnesota (5-11) T11. Purdue (5-11) 13. Northwestern (3-13) 14. Rutgers (2-15) Women's Basketball Scores

Monday, Feb. 26 SOUTH Alabama A&M 65, Florida A&M 43 Bethune-Cookman 84, Alabama

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Boston	45	12	.789	_	
New York	35	23	Pct .789 .603 .579 .379 .375	10½	
Philadelphia	33	24	.579	12 23½	
Toronto Brooklyn	22	35	.379	23 ¹ /2	
South	east	Divis	sion	20/2	
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Miami	31	25	.554	_	
Orlando Atlanta	32 25	20 32	.552 439	6½	
Charlotte	15	42	.263	16½	
Washington	9	48	.554 .552 .439 .263 .158	221/2	р
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Milwaukee	37	21	638	1	pi
Indiana	33	26	.559	5½	
Chicago	27	30	.474	10½	
Detroit WESTERN	8			29½	
South	voet	Divi	eion	-	
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New Orleans	34	24	.586		
Dallas Houston	33	24	.579 .439	1/2 81/2	
Memphis	20	37	351	131/2	
San Antonio	11	47	.190	23	
Northy	vest	DIVIS	sion		
Minnesete	W	L	Pct	GB	
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L.A. Clippers Sacramento Phoenix L.A. Lakers Golden State	37	19	.661	_	
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Phoenix	34	24	.586	4	
Golden State	29	20	518	7½ 8	
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Sund Milwaukee 11	9, Pl	nilade	elphia 9	98	
Phoenix 123,	L.A.	Lake	ers 113		
Phoenix 123, Indiana 133, I Cleveland 114		S 111 Sehin	aton 1(15	
Chicago 114,	New	Orle	ans 10	6	
Atlanta 100 (rlan	do Q	2		
Oklahoma Cit	y 12	3, Ho	ouston	110	
Denver 119, 0 Utah 128, Sar				3	
Charlotte 93,	Portl	and a	80		
Sacramento 1	23.	L.A. (Clipper	s 107	
Mond	av's	Gan	nes		
Toronto 130, I New York 113	ndia	na 14 troit 1	2Z 111		
Brooklyn at M	, De emp	his. I	ate		
Miami at Sacr					
Tuesd	ay's	Gar	nes		
Brooklyn at O Dallas at Clev	rianc	10,7 d7	p.m.		
Golden State	at W	ashir	naton. '	7 p.m.	
Golden State New Orleans	at N	ew Yo	ork, 7:3	0 p.m.	
Philadelphia a	at Bo	ston,	7:30 p	.m.	
Utah at Atlant Charlotte at M	a, 7: lilwa	30 p.	m. 		
Detroit at Chie	cado	. 8 p.	m.		
San Antonio a	at iviii	nneso	ota, 8 p	o.m.	
Houston at O	klaho	oma (Citv. 10	p.m.	
Miami at Port	and,	10 p	o.m.		
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New Orleans	at In	diana	a, 7:30	p.m.	
Cleveland at (Chica	ago, i	8 p.m.		
Memphis at M	linne	sota	, 8 p.m		
Sacramento a L.A. Lakers at		Clin	pers 1	0 n m	
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Utah at Orlan	do, 7	p.m	20 n m		
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	Los Angele	s56	529	17	10	681	74	152	
	Calgary								
	Seattle	57	24	22	11	591	59	166	
	Anaheim	58	20	35	3	431	51	207	
	San Jose	56	15	36	5	351	18	215	
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ea	ams in eacl	n di	visi	on a	and	two \	wild	b	
	rds per cor	fer	enc	e a	dvar	nce t	0		
bla	ayoffs.								

layons. Sunday's Games Tampa Bay 4, New Jersey 1 Pittsburgh 7, Philadelphia 6 Winnipeg 4, Arizona 3, OT Detroit 3, Chicago 2, OT Buffalo 3, Carolina 2, SO Columbus 4, N.Y. Rangers 2 Nachville 4, Anabeim 2

Columbus 4, N.Y. Rangers 2 Nashville 4, Anaheim 2 Monday's Games Washington 6, Ottawa 3 N.Y. Islanders 3, Dallas 2, OT Los Angeles at Edmonton, late Boston at Seattle, late **Tuesday's Games** Arizona at Montreal, 7 p.m. Buffalo at Florida, 7 p.m. Vegas at Toronto, 7 p.m. Washington at Detroit, 7 p.m. Carolina at Minnesota, 8 p.m. Ottawa at Nashville, 8 p.m. Ottawa at Nashville, 8 p.m. St. Louis at Winnipeg, 8 p.m. Los Angeles at Calgary, 9 p.m. Dallas at Colorado, 9:30 p.m. Pittsburgh at Vancouver, 10 p.m.

New Jersey at San Jose, 10 p.m. Wednesday's Games Columbus at N.Y. Rangers, 7 p.m. St. Louis at Edmonton, 8:30 p.m. Thursday's Games Arizona at Toronto, 7 p.m. Buffalo at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m. Carolina at Columbus, 7 p.m. Montreal at Florida, 7 p.m. N.Y. Islanders at Detroit, 7 p.m. Vegas at Boston, 7 p.m. Minnesota at Nashville, 8 p.m. Winnipeg at Dallas, 8 p.m. Colorado at Chicago, 9 p.m. Los Angeles at Vancouver, 10 p.m. Pittsburgh at Seattle, 10 p.m. Anaheim at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.

BASEBALL

Spring Training AMERICAN LEAGUE

	LEAGOL		
	w	L	Pct
Baltimore	3	1	.750
Boston	3	1	.750
Kansas City	3	1	.750
New York	3	1	.750
Texas	2	1	.667
Cleveland	2	1	.667
Detroit	1	1	.500
Tampa Bay	1	1	.500
Los Angelés	1	2	.333
Oakland	1	2	.333
Seattle	1	2	.333
Minnesota	1	2	.333
Toronto	1	2	.333
Houston	1	3	.250
Chicago	1	3	.250

NATIONAL			
	W	L	Pct
Los Angeles	4	01	1.000
Cincinnati	3	1	.750
New York	2	1	.667
Philadelphia	2	1	.667
St. Louis	2	1	.667
Miami	1	1	.500
Chicago	2	2	.500
Atlanta	1	2	.333
Washington	1	2	.333
Colorado	3	2	.600
Milwaukee	1	2	.333
Arizona	2	2	.500
Pittsburgh	0	3	.000
San Francisco	Ō	2	.000

San Diego 1 Sunday's Games 4

.200

Philadelphia 4, N.Y. Yankees (ss) 0 s) 0 St. Louis 3, Houston (ss) 0 Baltimore 2, Pittsburgh 0 Boston (ss) 8, Minnesota 6 Boston (ss) 5, Atlanta 4

N.Y. Yankees (ss) 12, Toronto 6 Detroit 9, Tampa Bay 9 N.Y. Mets 3, Houston (ss) 1 Washington 6, Miami 3 L.A. Dodgers 4, Oakland 2 Cincinnati 9, L.A. Angels (ss) 4 San Francisco 0, Texas 0 San Diego 7, Chicago Cubs 0 Kansas City 1, L.A. Angels (ss) 0 Arizona 5, Chicago White Sox 0 Cleveland 8, Seattle 4 Colorado 10, Milwaukee 3 Monday's Games Baltimore (ss) 2, Atlanta 1 Detroit 4, Houston 0 Tampa Bay 8, Baltimore (ss) 3 N.Y. Yankees 9, Minnesota 2 Boston 7, Philadelphia 6 N.Y. Mets 6, Washington 3 Toronto 8, Pittsburgh 4 St. Louis 1, Miami 1 Seattle 2, Cincinnati (ss) 0

Kansas City 6, Chicago Cubs 0 Texas 4, Chicago White Sox 2 Oakland 9, Arizona 8 L.A. Angels 11, San Francisco 9 Cleveland 7, San Diego 4 Cincinnati (ss) 8, Milwaukee 3 L.A. Dodgers 9, Colorado 4

Tuesday's Games Baltimore vs Detroit (ss) at Sara-sota, Fla., 1:05 p.m. Detroit (ss) vs Toronto at Lake-

Lotroit (ss) vs foronto at Lake-land, Fla., 1:05 p.m. Houston vs Washington at West Palm Beach, Fla., 1:05 p.m. Minnesota vs Philadelphia at Fort Myers, Fla., 1:05 p.m. St. Louis vs Boston at Jupiter, Fla., 1:05 p.m. Tampa Bay ve N X Yankees at

Tampa Bay vs N.Y. Yankees at Port Charlotte, Fla., 1:05 p.m.

Port Charlotte, Fla., 1:05 p.m. Pittsburgh vs Atlanta at Bradenton, Fla., 1:05 p.m. N.Y. Mets vs Miami at Port St Lucie, Fla., 1:10 p.m. Cleveland vs Oakland at Good-year, Ariz., 3:05 p.m. Kansas City (ss) vs Colorado at Surprise, Ariz., 3:05 p.m. L.A. Dodgers vs Chicago White Sox at Phoenix, 3:05 p.m. San Francisco vs Seattle at Scott-

Sox at Phoenix, 5.05 p.m. San Francisco vs Seattle at Scott-sdale, Ariz., 3:05 p.m. Chicago Cubs vs Cincinnati at Mesa, Ariz., 3:05 p.m. Arizona vs Texas at Scottsdale,

Ariz, 3:10 p.m. L.A. Angels vs Milwaukee at Tempe, Ariz., 3:10 p.m. San Diego vs Kansas City (ss) at

Peoria, Ariz., 3:10 p.m. Wednesday's Games

Minnesota vs Baltimore at Fort Myers, Fla., 1:05 p.m. Pittsburgh vs Detroit at Bradenton, Fla., 1:05 p.m.

Washington vs Boston at West Palm Beach, Fla., 1:05 p.m. Philadelphia vs Atlanta at Clear-

water, Fla., 1:05 p.m. Toronto vs Tampa Bay at Dunedin,

Fla., 1:07 p.m. Miami vs Houston at Jupiter, Fla.,

Miami vs Houston at Jupiter, Fla., 1:10 p.m. N.Y. Mets vs St. Louis at Port St Lucie, Fla., 1:10 p.m. Chicago White Sox vs San Diego at Phoenix, 3:05 p.m. Cleveland vs Arizona at Goodyear, Ariz., 3:05 p.m. Oakland vs San Francisco at Mesa Ariz 3:05 p.m.

Mesa, Ariz., 3:05 p.m. Texas vs L.A. Dodgers at Surprise,

Ariz., 3:05 p.m. Colorado vs L.A. Angels at Scottsdale, Ariz., 3:10 p.m. Seattle vs Kansas City at Peoria,

Ariz., 3:10 p.m. Milwaukee vs Chicago Cubs at Phoenix, 3:10 p.m.

TRANSACTIONS

Monday's Transactions BASEBALL

Major League Baseball National League MIAMI MARLINS — Agreed to terms with C Curt Casali on a minor league approach league contract. SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Agreed to terms with INF Nick Ahmed on a minor league contract. Reas-signed LHPs Reggie Crawford and Thomas Szapucki to minor league

camp BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association CLEVELAND CAVALIERS — Signed G Sharife Cooper to a 10-day contract. MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES — Signed F Matt Hurt to a 10-day contract. FOOTBALL

National Foot BALL BALTIMORE RAVENS — Hired Mark DeLeone as inside linebackers coach, Dennis Johnson as defensive line coach, Doug Mallory as defensive backs coach and Travelle Wharton as assistant offensive line coach LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Hired JoJo Wooden as senior director of

player personnel. HOCKEY

National Hockey League DALLAS STARS — Recalled D Der-rick Pouliot and C Logan Stankoven from Texas (AHL). NASHVILLE PREDATORS —

Reassigned F Egor Afanasyev to Milwaukee (AHL).

6347

Raptors beat Pacers

(Continued from Page 6) going 2 of 11 from the field. The Pacers shot just 46% as a team.

And the defense, at least in the opinion of Mathurin, was even worse.

"Defense was our main thing and I'll go ahead say it, I was really bad on defense tonight," said Mathurin, who drew the assignment on Barrett. "So I'm looking forward to the next game."

Toronto built a 61-56 lead after a back-and-forth first half, and then watched Indiana score six straight in the third quarter to make it 67-66.

The Raptors answered with an 11-0 run, only to see the Pacers charge back within 90-87 at the end of three, tie it on Mathurin's 3 to open the fourth and eventually take a 96-95 lead on Jalen Smith's putback with 10:04 to go.

Instead of pulling away, the Pacers let Toronto hang around and Dick's tie-breaking 3 with 8:01 left spurred a 10-2 run that gave the Raptors a 112-104 lead and Indiana never seriously challenged again.





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Howard 76, Coppin St. 73
MdEastern Shore 67, SC State 51
Norfolk St. 79, Morgan St. 49
Prairie View 69, MVSU 63
MIDWEST
Mississippi 66, Missouri 45
SOUTHWEST
ArkPine Bluff 81, Texas Southern
62

NBA EASTERN CONFERENCE Atlantic Division

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N.Y. Range						
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Washingto	n5727	21	9	63150	178	
New Jerse	y5829	25	4	62191	203	
N.Y. Island	ers582	420	14	62170	197	
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Colorado	5935	19	5	75216	188	
Nashville	59 32	25	2	66184	187	
St. Louis	57 30	25	2	62167	178	
Minnesota	58 28	24		62186		
Arizona	57 23	29	5	51166	188	

EASTERN CONFERENCE

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Boston

Florida Toronto

Detroit

Ottawa Montreal

Tampa Bay60 32 23 Buffalo 58 27 27

Atlantic Division GP W L OTPts GF GA

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 58 32 20
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 70205 183

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3 53189 199 8 52163 209

NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Reas-signed F Noal Foote to Utica (AHL). TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Reassigned F Cole Koepke to Syracuse

WASHINGTON CAPITALS — Recalled LW Ivan Miroshnichenko from Hershey (AHL). Minor league American Hockey League AHL — Suspended F Jakub Vrana for two games for his actions during a Feb. 25 game at Bridgeport. SOCCER MLS Next Pro



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Agriculture **USDA projects decreased** planted commodity acres in 2024

By AGDAILY

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has unveiled its forecast for the upcoming 2024-2025 crop year, predicting a reduction in the acreage dedicated to key crops such as corn, wheat, and soybeans, alongside a projected dip in commodity prices compared to prior seasons.

This outlook, informed by insights from the January 12 National Agricultural Statistics Service Wheat and Canola Seedings report, relies on the assumption of typical weather patterns during the forthcoming planting and growing periods.

The anticipated total acreage for corn, wheat, and soybeans stands at 225.5 million acres, marking a slight 1 percent decline from the previous year, primarily driven by expectations of reduced prices and a return to standard levels of prevent plant acres. Projections suggest that the season-average farm prices for these commodities will dip below 2023 levels and fall short of the three-year average.

While the planted area is forecast to be lower than last year, the harvested area is

expected to increase year-toyear as abandonment returns to normal levels following two years of drought in the Southern Plains.

In Illinois, often viewed as a Corn Belt benchmark, production costs have notably decreased compared to the previous year, with fertilizer prices, such as anhydrous ammonia, plummeting nearly 40 percent and diesel expenses down by 20 percent. However, there has been a marginal uptick in interest costs.

The corn production forecast for the upcoming year anticipates a yield of 15.040 billion bushels, showing a slight 2 percent decline from the record set in the previous year, with an estimated planted area of 91.0 million acres. Despite expectations of increased domestic use and exports, the corn crop is likely to yield higher ending stocks. Projections indicate an average corn price of \$4.40 per bushel, representing a decrease of 40 cents from the preceding year.

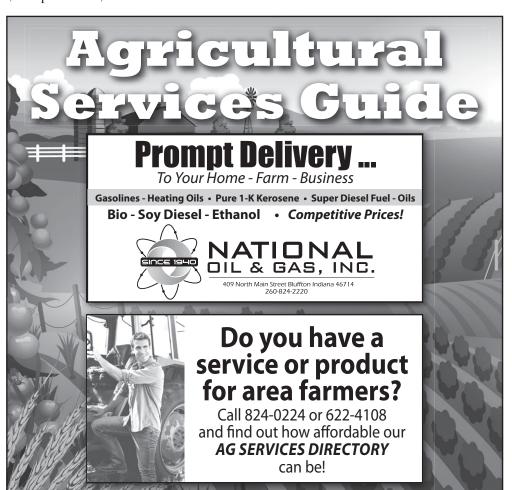
Moving on to soybeans, the outlook suggests augmented supplies, utilization, and ending stocks, coupled with a decrease in

prices. Projections for soybean production stand at 4.5 billion bushels, reflecting an 8 percent surge from the previous year. The soybean crush is poised to hit a record high of 2.4 billion bushels, fueled by the expanding biofuel sector, while exports are also expected to climb. The average soybean price is forecasted at \$11.20 per bushel, marking a decline of \$1.45 compared to the 2023-2024 figures.

The upcoming year's wheat production is anticipated to rise by 5 percent compared to the previous year, reaching 1,900 million bushels, with total projected usage also increasing by 2 percent over the same period. However, wheat exports are expected to linger below the long-term average. The season-average farm price for wheat is estimated at \$6.00 per bushel, marking a decline of \$1.20 from the 2023-2024 figures.

Regarding rice, the outlook for 2024-2025 foresees higher supplies owing to larger beginning stocks and record-high imports, with total production remaining nearly unchanged. All rice ending stocks are projected

to reach their highest level since 2014/15. The average farm price for all rice is expected to decrease by \$1.60 per cwt to \$16.80.



Connecticut, B-0153, B-1380, B-0127, B-0200, B-0151.

DIVERSIONS

Balancing parenthood's struggles and sacrifices

Dear Annie: Thank you for letting myself unless people know the importance of donating pet food to food banks and shelters. Right now we are facing a record number of pets whose families can't feed them! If everyone who could helped pets who have been cared for and loved their whole lives, they wouldn't end up in a noisy, scary, crowded shelter — where they most likely will lose their life. Please continue to let people know how important this is. - Animal Expecting Help Lover

your letter.

Dear Annie: My husband and I had our son in February of 2023. During labor and delivery, I managed to get a herniated disc that leaves me in total body pain all day every day, and there are times when I can barely walk. My husband works Monday through Friday 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. as a sanitation loader, while I am a stay-at-home mom

Over the last year I still managed to wake up early, get my husband up and ready for work, take care of the baby, etc. On Friday and Saturday nights, I ask him to wake up with the baby IF or when he does (it's not that often, when he does wake, and usually takes about five minutes to put him back down for bed) just so I can try to catch a break and get rest for my back. Keep in mind, I have trouble sleeping because of the physical pain I am in and because he drinks and snores a lot.

Recently, he told me that he's tired of doing it, and I need to step up and do more. When he is home, the only thing I ask him to do is change the baby's diaper. I typically deal with the baby

what I'm doing isn't making him happy; then he'll stop gaming and help with him. Am I expecting too much from mv husband? Thanks for any help or advice. -

Dear Expect-Dear Animal Lover: Thank you for ing Help: I'm sure when you read the book about what to expect when you're expecting, you didn't think you would have to deal with a husband who seems to be taking a bit of a back seat to parenting. It sounds like you are both tired and working very hard. When we are sleep-deprived, we are not our best selves, and people can say and do things they don't mean.

> about just that -how hard this stage of parenting is. You might seek the help of a marriage counselor if he continues to put all the work on you. In the long run, he will be missing out because anything worthwhile is hard work. Being attentive to your son is hard work – but so rewarding for a lifetime.

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





It is important for you two to talk

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BEETLE BAILEY HEY! THESE MEATBALLS DON'T EAT ARE REALLY GOOD! HOSE! THEY'RE FOR THE GENERAL!





YOUR COMIC STRIP 'THE

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ZITS





NO JOKE? YOU HAD A WATERBED LOTOF PEOPLE IN COLLEGE? DID. SCOTTANI BORGHUN 2:27 CRANKSHAFT





40U STILL GETA BLESS 40U! NEWSPAPER !?

My Answer By Dr. Billy Graham

Question: Touring parts of Greece recently my husband and I were stunned to learn that many people there still worship the ancient gods. We visited the Parthenon and were disappointed that there was no indication of where the Apostle Paul actually gave his address to the people of Athens. Isn't this what made the location famous? – A.G.

Answer: As Paul was proclaiming Christ to the people of Athens, his spir-

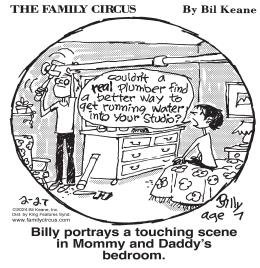
Make Him the center of your thoughts, words, and deeds

on the way, men asked Paul to explain his new doctrine.

Standing in the midst of the crowd, he said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:22-23, NKJV).

nians looked upon and bowed down, proclaiming that God made from one blood every nation to dwell on the face of the earth ... that they would seek the Lord. This message still resounds today around the world.

The city of Athens in Paul's day was not much different from today's carnal culture. Idols today are not statues made of gold and marble, but from entertainment, technology, and fashion industries. May we humble ourselves before God in repentance and make Him the center of our thoughts, words, and deeds. (This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Graham.)



2-27 The LOCKHORNS



"I COULD HAVE SWORN I HEARD APPLAUSE IN THE BACKGROUND WHEN I CALLED IN SICK."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

23

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it was troubled because the city had been given over to idols. Paul was given a forceful escort to the Areopagus, named for the Roman god of war, and also known as Mars Hill. This was the court of law where people gave speeches and debated world problems. While

The pagan society had a niche for every god in the world. They worshiped the constellations and the physical body, and they indulged every pleasurable obsession.

Paul preached the Gospel and dismantled the false power of the gods to whom the Athe-

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EMPLOYMENT

Help Wanted

WELLS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE is currently seeking applicants for the position of Full Time Deputy Sheriff. Applicants must be a US Citizen, at least 21 years of age upon graduation from police academy, possess a high school diploma or equivalent as well as a valid Indiana Operators License. Applicant can't have any felony convictions. Applicants must pass all aspects of the hiring process including physical agility testing, written examination, background investigation, oral interview, polygraph and physiological evaluation. Selected applicant must be able to graduate from the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy. ILEA certified applicants do not have to attend the physical agility and written examination portion of the pro-cess. 20-year matrix salary range for a Deputy Sheriff (no rank) is \$56,600 - \$68,400. Years of service and experience will be honored for a starting salary up to five years in the pay matrix. Pre-Applica-

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2/27

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February

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Lottery Numbers

Monday's Drawings HOOSIER LOTTERY Cash 5 — 12-18-23-29-

Cash4Life — 11-34-40-43-55, Cash Ball: 02

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Quick Draw Midday -03-04-08-11-18-19-22-29-33-37-39-42-43-54-55-57-62-63-71-77, BE: 04

Daily Three-Midday -05-02-03, SB: 02 Daily Three-Evening —

05-00-07, SB: 04 Daily Four-Midday -

09-00-04-02, SB: 02 Daily Four-Evening -03-04-03-08, SB: 04

Quick Draw Evening — 06-07-10-20-28-33-34-38-42-54-55-58-59-61-67-

69-71-75-77-78, BE: 78 Hoosier Lotto – Esti-

mated jackpot (for Wednesday): \$5.4 million **MEGA MILLIONS** Estimated jackpot (for Tuesday): \$563 million PÓWERBALL

24-29-42-51-54 Powerball: 16; Power Play: 3X

Pole Barns

Grarages

Vinly Siding

Metal Roofing

Poly Decks

Storm Damage



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MARCH 2 - 9 a.m. - Consignment auction. 6632 N. 500 W., Decatur, IN. Personal property: Furniture, antiques, jewelry, household, holiday decor, knife decor, collectibles, die cast, Scooby Doo, Betty Boop, books, vintage clothing, and more. Preview March 1, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Wiegmann Auc*tioneers*, wiegmannauctioneers. com, 260-447-4311. **BIDDING ENDS MARCH** - (Online Only Auction) 3 - Thè Estate of Álan Johnson, seller. 2021 Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited w/3,600 miles, (2) Vintage Triumph motorcycles, modern furniture, antiques, beer signs, model ships, quality tools, Schwinn Airdyne exercise bike, household, 2017 Grasshopper zero turn mower, 2018 Sure-Trac enclosed trailer. Preview: Feb. 29 from 4 p.m.-6 p.m., 3651 E. 1000 N., Ossian. Sale manag-er, Brandon Steffen, *The Stef-*

fen Group Inc., 260-824-3006, www.steffengrp.com. BIDDING ENDS MARCH 5 -(Online Only Auction) - The Estate of Alan Johnson, seller. Northern Wells, 3 bed-room ranch home on 1/2 acre with 2,384 square feet and 1 full bathroom. Preview: Feb. 29 from 4 p.m.-6 p.m., 3651 E. 1000 N., Ossian. Sale manager, Brandon Steffen, The Steffen Group Inc., 260-824-3006, www.steffengrp.com.



Supreme Court casts doubt on states' efforts to regulate social media

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Supreme Court cast doubt Monday on state laws that could affect how Facebook, TikTok, X, You-Tube and other social media platforms regulate content posted by their users. The cases are among several this term in which the justices could set standards for free speech in the digital age.

In nearly four hours of arguments, several justices questioned aspects of laws adopted by Republican-dominated legislatures and signed by Republican governors in Florida and Texas in 2021. But they seemed wary of a broad ruling, with Justice Amy Coney Barrett warning of "land mines" she and her colleagues need to avoid in resolving the two cases.

While the details vary, both laws aimed to address conservative complaints that the social media companies were liberalleaning and censored users based on their viewpoints, especially on the political right.

Differences on the court Wednesday emerged over how to think about the platforms as akin to newspapers that have broad free-speech protections, or telephone companies, known as common carriers that are susceptible to broader regulation.

Chief Justice John Roberts suggested he was in the former camp, saying early in the session, "And I wonder, since we're talking about the First Amendment, whether our first concern should be with the state regulating what we have called the modern public square?" Justices Samuel Alito and Clar-

ence Thomas appeared most ready to embrace arguments made by lawyers for the states. Thomas raised the idea that the companies are iseeking constitutional protection for "censoring other speech."

Alito complained about the term "content moderation" that the sites employ to keep material off their platforms.

"Is it anything more than a euphemism for censorship?" he asked, later musing that term struck him as Orwellian.

But Justice Brett Kavanaugh, seemingly more favorable to the companies, took issue with calling the actions of private companies censorship, a term he said should be reserved for restrictions imposed by the government.

"When I think of Orwellian, I think of the state, not the private sector, not private individuals," Kavanaugh said.

The precise contours of rulings in the two cases were not clear after arguments, although it seemed likely the court would not let the laws take effect. The justices posed questions about how the laws might affect businesses that are not the primary targets of the laws, including e-commerce sites like Uber and Etsy and email and messaging services.

The cases are among several the justices have grappled with over the past year involving social media platforms. Next month, the court will hear an appeal from Louisiana, Missouri and other parties accusing administration officials of pressuring social media companies to silence conservative points of view. Two more cases awaiting decision concern whether public officials can block critics from commenting on their social media accounts, an issue that previously came up in a case involving then-President Donald Trump. The court dismissed the Trump case when his presidential term ended in January 2021.

The Florida and Texas laws were passed in the months following decisions by Facebook and Twitter, now X, to cut Trump off over his posts related to the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol by his supporters.

Trade associations representing the companies sued in federal court, claiming that the laws violated the platforms' speech rights. One federal appeal struck down Florida's statute, while another upheld the Texas law. But both are on hold pending the outcome at the Supreme Court.

In a statement when he signed the bill into law, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said the measure would be "protection against the Silicon Valley elites."

When Gov. Greg Abbott signed the Texas law, he said that it was needed to protect free speech in what he termed the new public square. Social media platforms "are a place for healthy public debate where information should be able to flow freely - but there is a dangerous movement by social media companies to silence conservative viewpoints and ideas.

That is wrong, and we will not allow it in Texas," Abbott said.

But much has changed since then. Elon Musk purchased Twitter and, in addition to changing its name, eliminated teams focused on content moderation, welcomed back many users previously banned for hate speech and used the site to spread conspiracy theories

The Biden administration is siding with the challengers. Lawyers for Trump have filed a brief in the Florida case urging the court to uphold the state law.

Still, Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar, the administration's top Supreme Court lawyer, cautioned the court to seek a narrow ruling that blocked the laws. Prelogar said governments maintain the ability to impose regulations to ensure competition, preserve data privacy and protect consumer interests.

Several academics and privacy advocacy groups told the court that they view the laws at issue in these cases as unconstitutional, but want the justices to preserve the government's ability to regulate social media companies to some extent.

Ex-FBI informant charged with lying about Bidens to remain jailed while he awaits trial

LOS ANGELES (AP) - A former FBI informant charged with fabricating a multimillion-dollar bribery scheme involving President Joe Biden's family must remain behind bars while he awaits trial, a judge ruled Monday, reversing an earlier order releasing the man.

U.S. District Judge Otis Wright II in Los Angeles ordered Alexander Smirnov's detention days after he was freed by another judge, then re-arrested while meeting with his lawyers at their offices in Las Vegas. Wright said he did not believe there were release conditions he could set that would guarantee that the man who has claimed to have ties to Russian intelligence would not flee the country.

"There is nothing garden variety about this case," Wright said. "I have not changed my mind. This man will be remanded pending trial."

Smirnov, 43, pleaded not guilty to the charges accusing him of falsely telling his FBI handler that executives from the Ukrainian energy company Burisma had paid President Biden and Hunter Biden The claim became central to the Republican impeachment inquiry of President Biden in Congress.

A different judge had released him from jail on electronic GPS monitoring after his Feb. 14 arrest. but Wright ordered him to be taken back into custody last week after prosecutors asked to reconsider Smirnov's detention. Wright said in a written order unsealed Friday that Smirnov's lawyers' efforts to free him were "likely to facilitate his absconding from the United States."

In urging the judge to keep him in jail, prosecutors revealed Smirnov has reported to the FBI having extensive contact with officials associated with Russian intelligence, and claimed that such officials were involved in passing a story to him about Hunter Biden. Prosecutors said Smirnov had been planning to travel to multiple countries days after his Feb. 14 arrest to meet with foreign intelligence contacts.

Prosecutor Leo Wise told the judge Monday that hirnov could not be trust

monitoring his whereabouts if released from jail, noting that he was pushing a new false story about Hunter Biden during a meeting with investigators as recently as September. Prosecutors have accused Smirnov in court papers of "actively peddling new lies that could impact U.S. elections.'

Wise said the reason Smirnov was re-arrested at his lawyers' offices in Las Vegas was that he had nine firearms at his home.

Smirnov, who holds dual Israeli-U.S. citizenship, is charged by the same Justice Department special counsel – Delaware U.S. Attorney David Weiss - who has separately filed gun and tax charges against Hunter Biden.

Smirnov was escorted into the courtroom Monday wearing an off-white jail jumpsuit and black rimmed eyeglasses and was seated at the table with his lawyers. Defense attorney David Chesnoff told reporters outside the courthouse after the hearing that he plans to go to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to continue to for his release

Smirnov has no criminal history and has strong ties to the United States, including a longtime significant other who lives in Las Vegas. Chesnoff told the judge that Smirnov was being held largely in isolation with access to a phone only once or twice a week, and that he was needed to assist in his own defense.

"He intends to vigorously defend these allegations, having never been in trouble his entire life," Chesnoff said.

In his ruling last week releasing Smirnov on GPS monitoring, U.S. Magistrate Judge Daniel Albregts in Las Vegas said he was concerned about the defendant's access to what prosecutors estimate is \$6 million in funds, but noted that federal guidelines required him to fashion "the least restrictive conditions" ahead of trial.

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