

## Spring 2024 Senior Living Special Section Today

## Lunch & Learn opens with bluebird program

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Sports

## NE8 boys' hoops awards released

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#### Shopping local

The Wells County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Centre hosted a Small Town Formal Event Expo Saturday, featuring a variety of vendors for decor, catering and more. Above is Krysta Fornal of Son-Rise Bakery in Warren, and at right, Amy Sprunger of and Andrea Vanden Topp, both area photographers. (Photos by Holly Gaskill)

## Head Start aims to fight poverty, but teachers struggle to make ends meet

By MORIAH BALINGIT AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — In some ways, Doris Milton is a Head Start success story. She was a student in one of Chicago's inaugural Head Start classes, when the antipoverty program, which aimed to help children succeed by providing them a first-rate pre-

Milton loved her teacher so much that she decided to follow in her footsteps. She now works as a Head Start teacher in Chicago.

school education, was in its infancy.

After four decades on the job, Milton, 63, earns \$22.18 an hour. Her pay puts her above the poverty line, but she is

far from financially secure. She needs a dental procedure she cannot afford, and she is paying down \$65,000 of student loan debt from National Louis University, where she came within two classes of getting her bachelor's degree. She dropped out in 2019 when she fell ill.

"Î'm trying to meet their needs when nobody's meeting mine," Milton said of teaching preschoolers.

Head Start teachers — 70% of whom have bachelor's degrees — earn \$39,000 a year on average, far less than public school teachers with similar credentials. President Joe Biden wants to raise their pay, but Congress has no plans to expand the Head Start budget.

Many have left the job — about one in five teachers turned over in 2022 — for higher-paying positions at restaurants or in retail. But if Head Start centers are required to raise teacher pay without additional money, operators say they would have to cut how many kids they serve.

The Biden administration says the program is already turning kids away because so many teachers have left, and not enough workers are lining up to take their places. And officials say it does not make sense for an anti-poverty program, where people of color make up 60% of the workforce, to underpay

(Continued on Page 2)

## Congressional leaders come out with 6 spending bills to avoid partial shutdown

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressional leaders on Sunday came out with a package of six bills setting full-year spending levels for some federal agencies, a step forward in a long overdue funding process beset by sharp political divisions between the two parties as well as infighting among House Republicans.

The release of the text of legislation over the weekend was designed to meet the House's rule to give law-makers at least 72 hours to study a bill

before voting. And it's a promising sign that lawmakers will avoid a partial shutdown that would kick in at 12:01 a.m. Saturday for those agencies covered under the bill, such as Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Transportation, Justice and others.

Congressional leaders hope to complete votes on the package this week and continue negotiations on the remaining six annual spending bills to pass them before a March 22 deadline. The price tag for the package out Sunday comes to about \$460 billion, representing less than 30% of the dis-

cretionary spending Congress looks to approve for this year. The package still being negotiated includes defense

House Speaker Mike Johnson highlighted some key policy and spending wins for conservatives, even as many of his GOP colleagues consider the changes inadequate. Some House Republicans had hoped the prospect of a shutdown could leverage more concessions from Democrats. Overall, this year's spending bills

would keep non-defense spending rel-(Continued on Page 2)

# Commissioners hope to recognize county efforts

By HOLLY GASKILL

The Wells County Commissioners have begun an initiative to recognize "exceptional citizenship" in Wells County.

Commissioner Mike Vanover explained that, as a board, the commissioners want to thank residents for serving the community, both in simple and large ways. Submissions are now being accepted through the county website at wellscounty.org/wells-county-exceptional-citizenship-nomination/.

The submission form asks for the contact information of the person filing the form, the contact information of the nominated person, and the reason for nomination.

Contingent on submissions, the commissioners plan to recognize exceptional citizenship every month. Vanover hopes the venture fosters a culture of community involvement, as well as recognizes the community servants who are often too humble to draw attention to their work.

holly@news-banner.com

# Senate axes 13th check bid in favor of long-term plan

Contentious election and cosmetology bills advance as penal facility concurrence stumbles.

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ, CASEY SMITH and WHITNEY DOWNARD Indiana Capital Chronicle

A years-long disagreement between Statehouse Republicans over how best to fund pension benefit bonuses came to a head on Thursday when a Senate committee stripped a House bill providing 13th checks and instead inserted a Senate bill introducing a future hybrid approach.

Senators also approved legislation prioritizing "intellectual diversity" in higher education institutions – over academic freedom fears – alongside controversial election security and cosmetology bills. But they encountered a stumbling block on a prison proposal.

Indiana's lawmakers have traditionally offered public retirees a 13th check or a cost-of-living adjustment to supplement pension benefits that lag inflation. The ad hoc bonuses have become a sticking point between the House, which favors them, and the Senate, which has desired a long-term solution.

Last year, lawmakers approved no bonus, angering many public retirees.

"We have to fix this so we're not having these discussions every year," said Sen. Ryan Mishler, who chairs the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee.

This session, the House put forth legislation giving public retirees a 13th check this year. The Senate, meanwhile, proposed Senate Bill 275, establishing a long-term, hybrid approach in 2025 – but it never got a hearing in the House, killing it.

But when the Appropriations panel added House Bill 1004 to its agenda just before Senate deadlines, it wasn't for a compromise. Mishler offered an amendment emptying the bill and replacing it with his chamber's version.

Mishler said he doesn't believe the General Assembly can do both in tandem.

"We have to build the fund up," he said. "If you do a 13th check, you're going to prolong the permanent fix. That's the trade-off."

A fund already exists to pay for such additional benefits. But Mishler told reporters public employers would face higher surcharge rates to finance both the short-term and long-term approaches at the same time.

"They wouldn't be able to afford that," he said.

Several groups representing public retirees said they continued to support the long-term fix, but were disappointed in the lack of a short-term stopgap.

"What are we going to do in the meantime for retired educators?" asked Laura Penman, executive director of the Indiana Retired Teachers Association.

"The budget is not an issue," said Jessica Love, executive director of the Indiana Public Employees Association. "... Retirees are struggling, and you have the ability to rectify that in a small way – this year."

The Indiana Public Retirement System confirmed by email that lawmakers could do both "if all actuarial assumptions are met" but warned that it hasn't examined the risks (Continued on Page 2)

#### Incido

Opinion Niki Kelly . . . . . . 4

### Outside



Sunny and warm today with rain tonight

Today	Tuesday	Wed.				
High 74	High 63	High 50				
Low 56	Low 42	Low 35				

More Weather on Page 2

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Vol. 95 No. 104

MONDAY

March 4, 2024



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Weather

Monday, March 4, 2024

(24-hour observations at 11:54 p.m. Sunday at Fort

**Wayne International Airport)** 

Wells County forecast

**Today:** Partly sunny, with a high near 74. South wind 10

**Tonight:** A 50% chance of rain and thunderstorms after

Tuesday: Rain and possibly a thunderstorm. High near

1 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 56. South wind

63. South wind 10 to 15 mph becoming west in the after-

noon. Winds could gust as high as 25 mph. Chance of pre-

cipitation is 80%. New rainfall amounts between a tenth and

quarter of an inch, except higher amounts possible in thun-

Mostly cloudy, with a low around 42. Northwest wind

around 10 mph becoming northeast after midnight. Chance

**Tuesday Night:** A chance of rain and thunderstorms.

Wednesday: A 20% chance of rain before 1 p.m. Mostly

Wednesday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around

Thursday Night: A 20% chance of rain after 1 a.m.

**Friday:** Rain likely, mainly after 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy,

Friday Night: Rain likely. Mostly cloudy, with a low

Saturday: A 50% chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a

Saturday Night: A chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a

Sunday: A chance of rain. Partly sunny, with a high near

**Thursday:** Mostly sunny, with a high near 53.

with a high near 55. Chance of precipitation is 60%.

Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 1.72

High: 66, Low: 38, Precipitation: None

to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

feet at 8:45 p.m. Sunday

derstorms.

35. Breezy.

high near 50.

low around 33.

(Continued from Page 1)

atively flat with last year's

bill, despite the rise in infla-

tion, and some \$70 billion

less than what President Joe

secured key conservative

policy victories, rejected

left-wing proposals, and

imposed sharp cuts to agen-

cies and programs critical to

President Biden's agenda,"

Johnson said in a prepared

son and Senate Major-

ity Leader Chuck Schumer

announced an agreement on

the top-line spending levels

for this year's discretion-

ary spending, which comes

to more than \$1.6 trillion.

But that agreement didn't

address potential policy

mandates placed within the

bills. That's where negotia-

tions have focused in recent

most of the policy riders that

House Republicans sought

to include. For example,

they beat back an effort to

reverse the FDA's decision

that allows the abortion pill

mifepristone to be sold in

retail pharmacies, instead of

only in hospitals, clinics and

medical offices. Democrats

also said the bill would fully

fund a nutrition program for

low-income women, infants

and children known as WIC.

providing about \$7 billion

for the program, a \$1 billion

increase from the previous

"Throughout the nego-

tiations, Democrats fought

hard to protect against cuts

to housing and nutrition pro-

grams, and keep out harmful

provisions that would further

restrict access to women's

health, or roll back the prog-

ress we've made to fight

climate change," Schumer,

D-N.Y., said in support of

Democrats staved off

Earlier this year, John-

statement.

"House Republicans

Biden originally sought.

of precipitation is 30%.

cloudy, with a high near 50. Breezy.

Mostly cloudy, with a low around 38.

around 42. Chance of precipitation is 60%.

#### Senate axes bill

(Continued from Page 1)

Indiana would face if finances failed to meet those assumptions.

Moving forward with both approaches would increase INPRS unfunded liabilities by \$779 million, spokesman Dimitri Kyser wrote. That would also decrease the funded statuses for the 1996 Teachers Retirement Fund and the Public Employees Retirement Fund by about 3% and 2%, respectively.

Mishler was firmly against adding an ad hoc 13th check this year, but conceded, "Anything is possible."

House Speaker Todd Huston told reporters Thursday that he believed lawmakers could do both bills, and that he was "optimistic" retirees could see extra help this year.

The legislation is expected to go to conference committee. Lawmakers from the House and Senate will negotiate to finalize a version on which both chambers can agree.

#### Senate sends conservative-friendly education bill to governor

After weeks of contentious debate in both chambers, senators sent to the governor a bill that GOP lawmakers contend will push speech in college classrooms toward "intellectual diversity.

Sen. Spencer Deery, R-West Lafayette, who authored Senate Bill 202, said it adds protections to state law to ensure professors can't be retaliated against "for criticizing administrators for the content of your research or for your outside political views." The measure got the final green light in a 33-12 vote, largely along party lines.

"Getting this bill to this point is a win for academic freedom, for free expression and intellectual diversity on college campuses. And it's a victory for those of us who believe that universities should challenge students by fostering ... intellectually diverse communities," Deery said. "Some Indiana public universities are already thriving on those grounds. This measure will empower them to improve with minimal disruption or inconvenience to how they already operate."

Deery and other Republican lawmakers contend that conservative students and faculty members are increasingly ostracized at progressively liberal college and university settings — or at least perceive such shunning.

The bill will require institutional boards of trustees' existing diversity committees to consider "intellectual diversity" alongside cultural diversity in employment policies and faculty complaints. It will additionally require the committees to make recommendations promoting recruitment and retention of "underrepresented" students rather than the "minority students" specified in current law.

Boards of trustees will further be required to prevent a faculty member from getting tenure or a promotion if the board thinks the member

is "unlikely to foster a culture of free inquiry, free expression and intellectual diversity" and unlikely to offer students scholarly works from a range of "political or ideological frameworks." Boards could also dock members considered likely to bring up personal political views unrelated to their specific field or class.

Democrats, however, said they were still concerned the legislation would hamper the state's ability to attract pro-

"It stifles speech and (the) ability for professors to speak their mind and challenge ideas in the classroom," Sen. Fady Qaddoura, D-Indianapolis, said.

#### **Elections bill moves forward**

Four Republicans crossed party lines to vote against an election security bill with Democrats but the coalition wasn't enough to sink the bill, which passed on a 31-13 vote.

Sen. Mike Gaskill, R-Pendleton, described House Bill 1264 as a measure that "strengthens the requirement for proof of U.S. citizenship, identification and residency" for voter registration applications.

Indianapolis Democrat Sen. J.D.

Ford disagreed with that characterization, saying it would make it more difficult for Hoosiers to vote in addition to flagging voters "for potential cancellation (based on) possibly unreliable commercial data.' 'To me, this bill is security theater

at its best, making it more difficult for eligible voters to participate in elections and (for) registration officials to perform their work," Ford said.

He argued unhoused people and college students would face hurdles when they tried to register to vote. Indiana, Ford noted, ranked second-to-last for voter participation in the nation.

Democrats additionally denounced language that would allow state election officials to pay for commercially available data - such as Experian's TrueTrace — and compare that with voter lists.

Gaskill defended the legislation.

'I think this is a good, common sense bill that adds some protections, as I said before, that the people who vote in our elections are going to be citizens. And we're going to have a little stronger reliability that they live where they're actually registered," he said.

The bill now moves to the governor's desk.

#### Cosmetology bill makes the cut

A bill to establish a cosmetology apprenticeship program faced bipartisan opposition, with ten 'no' votes from Republicans and eight Democrats. One Democrat crossed to vote with Republicans, pushing the bill out of the chamber on a 31-18 vote.

House Bill 1135 similarly split testimony in committee, with dozens of hairdressers, beauticians and barbers convinced it would either widen the talent pipeline or degrade workforce quality.

"Currently the only way to obtain a cosmetology license is to attend a cosmetology school, which will always continue to train most students ... (this) opens up opportunities for a hybrid approach," said Sen. Linda Rogers, the bill's Senate sponsor. "Regardless of whether you have attended a beauty school or work the required number of hours as an apprentice, everyone must still pass the same State Board written

rently have such apprenticeships available. In a committee chaired by Rogers, senators opted to strike compact language to avoid a fiscal, meaning that the bill will need to be approved by the House before it can become law.

of the great cosmetologists that are working throughout Indiana today and that all of us rely on to look our best,"

improperly training mentees.

"I just think this is not a proven thing. And you know I'm all about apprenticeships," Leising said.

ship would be more affordable than a beauty school, potentially saving students thousands of dollars in student

do we get ahead of student debt, and this bill is one of those ways that we can start to do that," Deery said.

#### What's next for failed vote on penal bill

sensus on Senate Bill 23 following House amendments, which some worried were too broad. The vote on the bill was 20-25, meaning it didn't get enough votes to either defeat or pass it.

The measure would have made damaging a penal facility — including its fixtures and equipment — a Level 6 felony. It passed out of the Senate in January on a 47-2 vote and with unanimous approval from House lawmakers.

But several senators expressed concerns that the House, by broadening definitions beyond light fixtures and fire suppression systems, had included too much. Author Sen. Vaneta Becker, R-Evansville, took the bill off concurrence after the failed vote.

'We'll get it fixed!" she told report-

changes and send the bill to a conference committee for further consideration. Or, she can call it down again for

Senators also approved Senate Bill 132 for final passage, sending it to the governor. The wide-ranging bill touches on licensing for foreign-educated nurses and insurance payments for dentists.

She noted that 22 other states cur-

"This legislation does not affect any Rogers concluded.

Sen. Jean Leising, R-Oldenburg, noted that career centers across the state offered free cosmetology courses and had concerns about mentors

Deery argued that a paid apprentice-

"I just ask you to think about how

Senators failed to come to a con-

Becker can dissent to the House's another attempt at concurrence.

"We would be cut to extinction," Esser wrote in a letter to the Biden administration, "leaving children and families with little to no opportunity for a safe, nurturing environment to achieve school readiness."

Arlisa Gilmore, a longtime Head Start teacher in Tulsa, Oklahoma, said if it were up to her, she would not sacrifice any slots to raise teacher pay. She makes \$25 an hour and acknowledges she's lucky: She collects rental income from a home she owns and shares expenses with her husband. The children in her classroom are not so fortunate.

"I don't think they should cut classrooms," Ğilmore said. "We have a huge community of children that are in poverty in my facility."

**Partial shutdown** 

the legislation. House Republicans were able to achieve some policy wins, however. One provision, for example, will prevent the sale of oil in the

Strategic Petroleum Reserve to China. Another provision strengthens gun rights for certain veterans. Under current law, the VA must send a beneficiary's name to the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System whenever a fiduciary is appointed to help manage someone's benefits. This year's spending package prohibits the VA from

or herself, or others. Still, some of the more conservative members of the House GOP have been critical of the spending bills, and many voted against the short-term extension Congress passed last week that avoided a shutdown and allowed negotiations to con-

tinue.

transmitting that information

unless a relevant judicial

authority rules that the bene-

ficiary is a danger to himself

"We all promised we wouldn't do this crap when we got up here," Rep. Eric Burlison, R-Mo., said as the short-term extension was debated. "The American people have demanded responsible spending and border security for years, but we fail them. When will we heed the calls of our constituents to rein in the wasteful spending, secure the borders, and defeat the bureaucracy targeting them?"

The short-term extension last week was the fourth in recent months. The vote to approve it was 320-99, but House Republicans were divided, with 113 in support and 97 against. The Senate approved the extension,

## **Head Start aims**

(Continued from Page 1) its employees.

"We have some teachers who are making poverty wages themselves, which undermines the original intent of the program," said Katie Hamm, a deputy assistant secretary in the Office of Early Childhood Development.

Head Start, created as part of President Lyndon Johnson's "war on poverty," serves some of the neediest children, including those who are homeless, in foster care or come from households falling below the federal poverty line. With child care prices exceeding college tuition in many states, Head Start is the only option within financial reach for many families.

The Department of Health and Human Services, which administers the program, estimates a pay hike would not have a huge effect on the number of children served because so many programs already struggle to staff all their classrooms. Altogether, Head Start programs receive enough funding to cover the costs of 755,000 slots. But many programs can't fully enroll because they don't have enough teachers. It's why the department estimates only about 650,000 of those slots are getting filled.

The proposed change would force Head Start programs to downsize permanently because they would not be able to afford as many teachers.

That worries Head Start leaders, even though many of them back raising pay for their employees, said Tommy Sheridan, deputy director for the National Head Start Association. The association asked the Biden administration to allow some programs to opt out of the requirements.

'We love this idea, but it's going to cost money,' Sheridan said. "And we don't see Congress appropriating that money overnight."

While a massive cash infusion does not appear forthcoming, other solutions have been proposed.

On Monday, the Biden administration published a letter urging school districts to direct more of the federal money they receive toward early learning, including Head Start.

On Thursday, U.S. Reps. Mikie Sherrill, D-N.J., and Juan Ciscomani, R-Ariz., filed a bill that would allow Head Start to hire community college students who are working toward their associate degrees in child development.

The stakes are perhaps highest for rural Head Starts. A program outside of Anchorage, Alaska, is closing one of its five sites while struggling with a shortage of workers. Program director Mark Lackey said the heartwrenching decision allowed him to raise pay for the remaining workers in hopes of reducing staff turnover.

"It hurts, and we don't want to do it," Lackey said.

Overall, his program has cut nearly 100 slots because of a staffing shortage. And the population he serves is high-need: About half the children are homeless or in foster care. The Biden proposal could force the program to contract further.

Amy Esser, the executive director of Mercer County Head Start in rural western Ohio, said it's been difficult to attract candidates to fill a vacant teaching position because of the low pay. Starting pay at Celina City Schools is at least \$5,000 more than at Head Start, and the jobs require the same credentials.

But she warned hiking teacher pay could have disastrous consequences for her program, and for the broader community, which has few child care options for low-income households.





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#### **OBITUARIES**

#### Phyllis "Mimi" Makowski, 92

Phyllis "Mimi" Makowski, 92, of Bluffton, passed away peacefully Saturday evening, March 2, 2024, at River Terrace Estates, surround by her loving family.

She was born July 3, 1931, in Wausau, Wis., to Arthur and Dorothy Beilke. Phyllis was an avid bridge player who enjoyed reading and was the best cook and baker. She enjoyed her time as a homemaker and was a loving mother, grandma, great-grandma

and friend. She was a member of Tri Kappa and St.

Joseph Catholic Church. On June 16, 1951, Phyllis and Stanley "Stan" G.

Makowski were married in Wausau, Wis. They shared 63 years of marriage before Stan preceded her in death Sept. 10, 2014.

Survivors include her three sons, Steven (Sherry) Makowski, Jeff Makowski and Joel (Patty) Makowski, all of Bluffton; grandchildren, Phyllis "Betsy" (Andy) Needler of Montpelier, Matthew (Isabel) Makowski of Galveston, Texas, Albrecht Makowski of Bluffton, Fiona Makowski of Indianapolis, Tadeus Makowski of Indianapolis, Oriana (Corbin) Patterson of Indianapolis, Nicholas (Natalie) Makowski of Fort Wayne and Rachel (Jon) Riley of Bluffton; and great-grandchildren, Zoe, Ashlie, Reagan, Stan and Kayci Needler all of Montpelier, Guy and Ren Makowski of Galveston, Texas and Jackson and Emelia Riley of Bluffton.

Phyllis is preceded in death by her husband, Stan, and a son, Mark A. Makowski in 2018.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Tuesday, March 5, 2024, at St. Jospeh Catholic Church, with Father David Violi celebrating mass.

Visitation will be held from 10 a.m. Tuesday until the time of mass on Tuesday at the church.

Burial will take place at a later date at Elm Grove Cemetery in Bluffton.

Memorials may be made to St. Joseph Catholic Church or to the National Leukemia Association.

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the care of the Lemler family of Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton. Friends can send condolences to the Makowski family at www.thomarich.com.

#### Lynn A. Ealing, 71

Lynn A. Ealing, 71, of Bluffton, passed away Sunday afternoon, Mar. 3, 2024, at Ossian Health and Rehabilitation Center.

Funeral arrangements are pending with Goodwin – Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel in Bluffton.

#### Virginia D. Marvin, 96

Virginia D. Marvin, 96 of Bluffton, died Sunday afternoon, March 3, 2024, at Envive Health Care in Hunting-

Funeral arrangements are currently pending with the Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton.

#### Sherry G. Salyers, 66

Sherry G. Salyers, 66, of Bluffton, died Sunday afternoon, March 3, 2024, at River Terrace Retirement Com-

Funeral arrangements are pending with Goodwin -Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel in Bluffton.

## Literacy bill – with third grade retention requirement heads to Indiana governor

By CASEY SMITH, Indiana Capital Chronicle

Indiana senators gave final approval Thursday for a literacy overhaul bill that will require reading-deficient third graders to be held back a year in school.

Senate Bill 1, which seeks to remedy Indiana's literacy "crisis" by requiring schools to administer the statewide IREAD test in second grade — a year earlier than current requirements — and directing new, targeted support to atrisk students and those struggling to pass the exam.

But if, after three tries, a third grader can't meet the IREAD standard, legislators want school districts to retain them.

That number could reach into the thousands according to recent data.

While much of the rest of the bill has received bipartisan support, the retention language has been passionately debat-

ed in both chambers. Numerous teachers, parents and education experts argued there are various, negative long-term effects for students who are forced to retake third grade. But Republican lawmakers remained firm that Indiana does a disservice to kids who are promoted to the fourth grade without foundational reading skills.

The Senate voted 29-16 on Thursday in favor of the bill. Seven Republicans joined Democrats in rejecting the measure, in part over the House chamber's deletion of dyslexiaspecific supports for young learners.

Senate Bill 1 now heads to Gov. Eric Holcomb for his review and signature. The governor has not said where stands on the final version of the proposal but included third grade literacy — and mandatory retention — in his 2024 legislative agenda.

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## **Wells Court Docket**

#### Wells Superior Court **Criminal Cases**

Jeffrey D. Hall, 33, Bluffton; Sentenced to 180 days in the Wells County Jail with all but four days suspended. Hall pled guilty to one count of disorderly conduct, a Class B misdemeanor. One count of strangulation and one count of domestic battery in the presence of a child — both Level 6 felonies — were dismissed

as part of a plea agreement. Hall is required to serve six months on probation and pay court costs and filing fees in the amount of \$529.00

Casey L. Hundley, 42, Bluffton; Sentenced to 547 days in the Indiana Department of Correction with all but 104 days suspended. Hundley received 104 days of jail credit towards his sentence. Hundley pled

guilty to unlawful possession of a syringe, a Level 6 felony. One count of possession of methamphetamine, a Level 6 felony, possession of marijuana a misdemeanor, were dismissed pursuant to a plea agreement. Hundley was also ordered to serve 365 days on probation and pay court costs and filing fees in the amount of \$789.00

Levi Dean Bauer, 42. Bluffton; Sentenced to 547 days in the Indiana Department of Correction with all but two days suspended. The sentence was issued immediately after Bauer pled guilty to one count of residential entry, a Level 6 felony. Bauer is also required to spend 545 days on probation and pay court costs and filing fees in the amount of

## Indiana county hires yet another election supervisor

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. (AP) — An Indiana

county lost its top election official nearly every other month over the last year after a longtime supervisor resigned following a counting error in the November 2022 tally.

Voting advocates hope fears of a rocky election year will ease now that Monroe County has named a supervisor who is vowing to stay. The county clerk promoted a 24-yearold elections office assistant to the top job on Feb. 12, just 12 weeks before Indiana's May 7 primaries to choose candidates for U.S. Senate, governor and president.

"Given the national mood, public confidence in this election will likely be tested," the League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County said in a January letter urging county officials to quickly fill the role.

Voting advocates and local party chairs say enormous responsibilities and relatively low salaries have made it difficult to keep recent hires in Monroe. As home to Indiana University and the college town of Bloomington, the county is a Democratic island in overwhelmingly Republican Indiana.

Increased scrutiny around elections and threats to election workers have prompted waves of retirements and resignations from local election offices across the country since former President Donald Trump led efforts to challenge the 2020 vote counts. The resulting loss of institutional knowledge in the midst of many changes in voting laws is making 2024 a challenging election year.

"Not having somebody who's experienced in doing this and familiar with our county and how things have been done in the past makes the job heavier on the people who do have to do the work," said Debora Shaw, spokesperson for the Bloomington-Monroe League of Women Voters.

The turnover in Monroe began in early 2023 when Karen Wheeler, the supervisor since 2017, resigned following pressure that came mostly from her fellow Republicans over a mistake during the Nov. 2022 vote count. About 6.600 ballots were not added until the next morning, after unofficial results had already been sent to the Secretary of

Wheeler, 67, told The

PRICES GOOD Mar. 4 - Mar. 9, 2024

Associated Press that the early voting results had been kept on a digital storage device and were added to the unofficial tally by 9 a.m. that Wednesday. She said she took the blame and resigned to avoid being fired by the Democratic county clerk, but stands by the performance of her staff.

"Some people are always suspicious of elections, but people who know who we are had a lot of confidence," Wheeler said.

The county clerk, Nicole Browne, did not return the AP's phone and email messages requesting comment.

Wheeler said an election training specialist hired before her resignation was prepared by the county to succeed her, but she quit just weeks after Wheeler left. Three others then briefly filled the job — one stayed only a month.

Wheeler said she both loved and hated the job. She administered eight elections and oversaw more than 80 workers during early voting and 300 each Election Day. Wheeler described the role as liaison between candidates, the media, vendors, the state and the public. The election supervisor also writes ballots specific to each precinct.

"It's an extremely difficult job," Wheeler said. "And with Monroe County the pay was pretty low" around \$37,000 for the full-time, year-round

The starting pay was increased to \$55,674 for the latest hire, according to a county job posting.

Elections are becoming increasingly complex, the laws governing them change regularly, and the high turnover means officials stepping into these roles are less likely to be aware of resources that can help them, said Liz Howard, a election expert with the Brennan Center for Justice.

In Indiana, for example, a bill proposed this year would add a proof of residency requirement for firsttime voters registering inperson.

"Many people are unaware of the complexity and all the work that it takes to make that process so easy for voters," Howard said.

None of the Monroe officials reported being threatened, but such inci-

FAST,

RELIABL

dents are up sharply around the nation. Indiana lawmakers may join other states in increasing criminal penalties for threatening election workers, and the Justice Department formed a task force to address threats.

Monroe's party chairs, Democrat David Henry and Republican Taylor Bryant, praised Wheeler and lamented the office turnovers after her departure.

"That institutional memory is really hard to replace and replicate in a short peri-

od of time," Henry said. While Shaw, who has worked with the newly promoted supervisor before, said she is glad Kylie Moreland is reliable and has some experience, there is always a chance that a presidential election won't go smoothly.

"It would be an awful job if you just got thrown in," Wheeler said.

Moreland developed a passion for election law and the process last fall, and wants to build a lifelong career at "election central." Despite lacking years of experience, she feels well prepared after working the November election and has support from the Indiana Elections Division, she said.

Indiana Secretary of State Diego Morales announced this year that more than 60 counties will split \$2 million in federal funding for election security and other projects. Monroe County is not among them. His office said additional funding opportunities are being discussed.

As for Wheeler, she works now for the county parks and recreation department and volunteers to teach voter registration

"I have a much easier job and I get paid the exact same," she said.

#### **Financial Focus Keep voting for solid**

investment moves

It's Election Season again. As an investor, how should you respond to the various promises made by the candidates? To begin with, many campaign promises never become reality. And even those that do often don't affect the economy or the financial markets to the degree one might think.

The fact is that many events that do affect the markets are simply beyond the control of political leaders. For example, the Federal Reserve determines interest rates — and the Fed itself often acts in response to other events, such as the inflation that was caused, in part, by the supply chain backlogs during the CO-VID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, instead of making invest-ment decisions based on who is in office or what policies may result, stick with a long-term strategy that's appropriate for your goals, risk tolerance and time horizon. And follow tried-and-true techniques, such as diversifying your portfolio among different types of in-vestments. While diversification can't protect against all losses, it can help re-duce the impact of market volatility on

your portfolio.
Elections can give political leaders a lot of influence — but when it comes to making the right investment choices, you've got the power.

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### **Booting Hoosiers from the** ballot: a disheartening hearing

One after another, 14 Hoosiers were kicked off the May primary ballot Tuesday. • A young Black woman who is active

in the community following in the footsteps of her father. A successful businessman who

already loaned \$2 million to his congressional campaign. Another man who hoped to become

a judge. • A well-known Republican who crossed over once to vote on an interest-

ing Democrat race. And each time, my

In a state that regularly ranks at the bottom in voter turnout and civic engagement, the Indiana **Election Commission** 



wanted to serve their state.

zens? Sow distrust and anger in the electoral system?

Most of the challenges filed against candidates were meant solely to eliminate competition for an incumbent.

A few of the challenges were based on residency or whether a form was notarized. One candidate was removed because he accidentally filed his economic interest statement with the House instead of the Senate.

But most of them were about party affiliation.

To be able to run as a Democrat or Republican in the state, a person must prove their party affiliation. And this can be done in two ways. First, if your last two primary votes match the party you want to represent — you are in. But if that isn't the case, you can get the county party chairman to sign off on your candidacy.

one primary and was rarely used. But in January 2022, lawmakers made it stricter — upping it to your two most recent

What that means is you can vote Republican your whole life but if you voted Democrat in the last primary election — maybe there was an important race or your ballot had no choices — then you are at the mercy of your county chair. Or, you could vote Democrat your entire life in another state, but if you move for a job you can't run for office unless you get the chair to sign off.

And there are no guidelines for the 92 county chairs. Each has their own way of handling these requests. Some always approve them; some never approve them; some pick and choose what office they are comfortable with you running for.

the law, but you could tell it was bothering even them.

At one point they tabled a challenge to a woman's party affiliation to allow her to go to the Marion County Clerk's Office and try to find evidence to support her claims. It didn't work. Chunia Graves had provided proof via a private Democratic vote tracking system that she voted Democrat when she was away playing Division 1 sports at college. But that wasn't in Indiana and that is what matters under state law.

changed recently.

lican congresswoman — offered the amendment that drew vote. At that point the law was only one primary with the

"We're just trying to safeguard our parties' platform and brand so that we are certain that folks who are running under the Republican or the Democrat banner have fulfilled and can fulfill those values represented by the party," she

She even noted an example in her own family where it could have hurt a relative. That relative is a Democrat but crossed over in 2011 so they could vote for her.

people just able to vote or those who have moved from other states with consistent voting history that doesn't count. And so did a few Republicans.

Sen. Mike Bohacek, R-Michiana Shores, brought up a time when he had pulled a Republican ballot and then filed to fill an unclaimed commissioner seat. His opponent was the county chair. Under the change to the two-party rule, he

"You can see that it could be disenfranchising for somebody who wants to get re-engaged. I know that both parties, we're all trying to get young people engaged in this. Do

One attorney at Tuesday's election commission meeting seemed frustrated with the commission when he tried to defend two fellow Republicans who were removed.

That man — Mitch Harper of Fort Wayne — previously served as a Republican state representative for 12 years. He was elected as a precinct committeeman at age 18, which

But he was at the meeting on behalf of client Sid Mah-

mitteeman in Steuben County earlier this year but then moved to Johnson County in February. He was removed from the ballot because he didn't meet either exception.

mission is not entertaining what is clearly obvious to me. You're saying a person can be a Republican one day and somehow change that status," Harper said.

ment of party loyalty but said it has gone too far the other

Tuesday – often to stifle competition against an incumbent. And we wonder why people are turned off from the system? This is why.

so. But is it right? This primary rule is being wielded as a weapon to discourage participation.

And I think every lawmaker should have to sit through that meeting. Because they would be disheartened too.

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Niki Kelly

## **Opinions**

was forced to turn away more than a dozen Hoosiers who

Is this what we really want to do? Disenfranchise citi-

God forbid Hoosier voters actually have a choice.

The so-called two-primary requirement used to be just

Indiana Election Commission members were following

Commissioner Karen Celestino-Horseman told Graves she was an impressive young lady.

"And I hope that no matter what happens today that you will go forward because our community needs more young women like you to serve as role models and leaders," she said. "Unfortunately, we have been saddled by this law that

I went back to 2021 to see how the move to two primaries originated. Then-Sen. Erin Houchin — now a Repubquite a bit of discussion before being accepted on a voice

county chair backup.

Democrats questioned the change, especially for young

wouldn't have been able to run, he said.

you think this is disenfranchising?"

would be prohibited by current law.

ant, who was barred from running for Congress.

Mahant was appointed a Republican vice precinct com-

"I'm going to end my discussion here because the com-

He noted the one-primary rule was a modest require-

Democrats used the law along with Republicans on

I know it's legal. The Indiana Supreme Court has said

Niki Kelly is the editor of the Indiana Capital Chronicle, a non-

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## The tao of Willie Nelson in today's polarized America

KEY WEST, Fla. — In the nascent days of his administration, Gov. Eric Holcomb found himself confronted with Willie Nelson's huge Prevost tour bus — the Honeysuckle Rose — in Evansville. Calls were made, and in short order the governor's boot heels were ambling up the RV steps.

According to sources close to the governor, Holcomb's appearance set off the kind of housekeeping that would ensue when an R.A. shows up at a dorm kegger. Willie's love of weed is widely known.

After chatting for 20 minutes or so, Holcomb tweeted out a photo of himself and the star, saying, "Amaz-

ing who you'll meet when you're on the road again. Thanks, @ willienelson for taking a couple of minutes to meet this lifelong fan."

This column isn't about cannabis reform (Holcomb has consistently said he will enforce federal cannabis laws until the FDA reschedules it, making Indiana a veritable reefer island), nor is it about the 50 Indiana National Guard troops the governor has committed to send to the southern border some 400 miles southwest of Willie's Luck, Texas, hideaway

I caught his concert at the local amphitheater in Key West, and in talking with fellow fans, it became clear that in today's deeply political polarization in America, Willie Nelson is one of the few figures who transcend the right and the left.

The 90-year-old is in a class by himself, having written more than 2,500 songs, recording over 250 albums and appearing before more than 3 million fans at live venues. Rocker Neil Young appeared with Nelson at Farm Aid in Noblesville last fall. "This is the man who started the whole thing," Young said of the phone call he received from Nelson when Farm Aid was held in Indianapolis in the '80s.

Nelson said at a pre-Farm Aid presser last fall: "It's a minor miracle all of us are all together again after 36 years. Thank you, farmers, for taking care of us, giving us good food to eat. Where I grew up in Abbott, Texas, I grew up on a farm. I picked cotton; I baled hay. I did all that stuff and I know how hard it is, but I know how good it is when you do it right."

So in these days of deep political polarization, why is Willie Nelson at the social fulcrum? In his 2006 book, "The Tao of Willie: A Guide to the Happiness in Your Heart," Nelson describes his suicidal days in Nashville when his hog farm went pork-belly up, his house burned down and he returned to his native Texas and rejoined the Austin music scene at the Armadillo World Headquarters.

'The Armadillo was nothing fancy," he writes, "but the beer was cold and the jalapeños on the nachos were hot, and the audiences — who were a wild mix of cowboys and hippies — liked all kinds of music."

This mutual compatibility with the right and left is worth exploring at this juncture as America heads into a jarring presidential race with democracy literally in

What is the Tao of Willie? I'll let him explain:

'As far as different religions are concerned, to me they're just different paths leading to the same place. A thousand paths to a single destination."

There's his adherence to the Golden Rule: "[I]f every person, every business, and every government simply followed the Golden Rule in all their decisions, everything else would just fall into place.

"Do unto others as you would have

them do unto you." On our security: "As nations,

Brian

Howey

**Politicking** than we do for peace, and in doing so, we make war inevitable. Achieving peace through strength doesn't necessarily mean you need bigger tanks or missiles, for peace can also be achieved through personal

we prepare much more for war

No matter what you do, be truthful. ...

"You'll never get ahead by blaming your problems

"If you forgive your enemies, it messes up their heads...

"Keep skunks of all kinds at a distance. ...

"Life is not about how fast you run or how high you climb, but how well you bounce." In the Tao of Willie, life is about playing music

with his family and friends, and at each concert, he seeks out a friendly face, a surefire avenue to connect with his audiences. But Willie Nelson has limits to his "If you throw trash along the highways or foul our

rivers, I'm sorry to say you are not my friend." (This assessment would certainly get the Holcomb stamp of approval as he has been obsessed with litter remediation along Hoosier interstates and highways.)

If you think that people whose skin is a different color from yours are beneath you, then you, particularly, are not my friend. ... 'If you mistreat those who are smaller and weaker

than you, you are not my friend."

Yes, these are relevant guideposts for public servants, politicians and voters.

I watched 90-year-old Willie Nelson do a two-hour show, playing longtime favorites "Still Is Still Moving to Me" and "Angels Flying Too Close to the Ground" and, of course, "On the Road Again." He didn't banter between songs, but his voice was durable, strong and

After the show, my friends and I ended up at the Green Parrot for a couple of rounds, and as we Ubered home, we joined the procession of Prevost tour buses. Here was Willie Nelson at Mile Marker 0 at the U.S. 1 proverbial "end of the road," heading back north across the Keys and back into the American mainstream.

Brian Howey is senior writer and columnist for Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs. Find Howey on Facebook and X @hwypol.

## Trump promises to protect Christians

Speaking to an audience of devoted fans at the National Religious **Broadcasters Convention** in Nashville last Friday, Donald Trump said if reelected president he will "... create a new federal task force on fighting anti-Christian bias. ... Its mission will be to investigate all forms of illegal discrimination, harassment and persecution against Christians in America."

Dr. Robert Jeffress, pastor of the mega First Baptist Church in Dallas, said Trump's speech "was the most powerfully pro-Christian speech I've ever heard from any president. He will win the Christian vote in a land-

From the beginning of the nation, presidents and candidates have used religious language and quoted Scripture to influence especially conservative Christians to vote for them and back their policies. Not all have meant what they said, or followed through in their personal and political lives in ways that reflected the faith they claimed to hold.

Trump also repeated his assertion that the "radical left ... want(s) to tear down crosses where they can, and cover them up with social justice flags," adding, "But no one will be touching the cross of Christ under the Trump administration, I swear to



Cal **Thomas** 

I always thought crosses were a good defense against vampires until someone told me there are no vampires in America. I replied, "see, the crosses are working!" But seriously, folks.

**Evangelical Christians** who believe government is necessary to defend their faith are getting their marching orders from somewhere other than the Scriptures they claim

to revere. For those who need a reminder on what should be expected from the unbelieving world, here are some verses that might help sharpen their focus.

Paul, an Apostle of Jesus, suffered numerous persecutions because of his faith. These included beatings, shipwrecks, hunger, jail and eventually death. He responded: "My persecutions and sufferings that happened to me ... I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Jesus Christ will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:11-12) All means all.

Jesus, Himself, told his disciples to expect persecution: "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you..." ( John 15;19-20)

Elsewhere, Matthew records Jesus saying: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:10-12)

The key words here are "for righteousness' sake" and "falsely." If one is persecuted for saying and doing stupid things the persecution is on

Christians all over the world have suffered harsh persecution. American Christians think they are being persecuted for things that would be considered trivial by those who have experienced imprisonment, even death, for their faith.

Surveys show that many Americans, especially the young, have stopped attending formal worship services because they see them as having been tainted by poisonous political agendas. People of strong faith who have not made a bargain with the political devils of our day don't need secular government to defend them. Like those Christians of the past they (and some in the present like Russian patriot Alexei Navalny) should stand strong for their faith, living it out in the world in obedience to the one they call "Lord." If they do that, the world just might stand back and marvel.

tcaeditors@tribpub.com

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



## Norwell Internship Spotlight award Olivia Hull

Senior Olivia Hull has been selected to receive the Norwell High School Internship Spotlight award. She has been doing her experience with Norwell Middle School librarian Tanya Milostan the entire school year. Olivia is the daughter of Terry and Dawn Hull of Murray.

Olivia has been a huge help with checking books in and out for the students. She assists the students with selections they would like to read. Olivia also helps with daily maintenance which

involves cleaning and organization. It's important to realize that the future of libraries is very promising as there is still something very authentic and genuine about curling up with a good book vs. the use of technology. Many libraries have diversified with reading programs, games and competitions, activities involving live animals, and story time to grab the interest of young readers.

After graduation, Olivia plans to attend IVY Tech University in Fort Wayne for gen-



Olivia Hull

eral studies. Her ultimate career goal is to focus on library sciences.

## **Lunch & Learn at Ouabache begins** March 14 with bluebird program

Ouabache State Park's Lunch & Learn 2024 programs will begin on Thursday, March 14, at noon at the Lodge by the Lake.

Program presenter will be Bob Mosshammer, IMN who will talk about "The Scoop on Bluebirds. Those attending should bring their own picnic lunch with dessert to be provided courtesy of Corner Depot. Sponsors of the programs are the Friends

of Ouabache State Park. Gate fees apply and program donations are accept-

2024 Series

April 18: The Wonders of Loblolly Marsh, Curt Burnette, Naturalist at the Limberlost State Historic

May 9: Kayaking the Wabash and Beyond, LaNae Abbot, avid kayaking adventurer.

June 13: All About Tur-

kev. Dian Jorday, National Wild Turkey Federation.

July 11: E.B. Williamson: Bluffton's Native Son, Alan Daugherty, author and local historian.

Aug. 8: Owls and Other Friends, Upper Wabash Interpretive Services.

Sept. 12: Pond Life: Jeff Ormiston, retired naturalist from Fox Island.

Oct. 10: Seed Collecting, Jody Heaston, DNR, IMN Coordinator.

## Warren's Pulse Opera House wins a dozen BroadwayWorld Awards

Warren's Pulse Opera

The awards included:

Best Musical Director— Danielle Webb for Into the

Cynthia for Into the Woods Best Lighting Design— Ron Wartzok for Into the Woods

Best Sound Design-Ron for Into the Woods

Best Performer in a Musical-Carson Cunningham for Into the

Best Supporting Performer in a Musical—Jana

Best Play-Sherlock Holmes: Baker Street lock Homes: Baker Street Irregulars Best Director of a

Play-Cynthia for Sherlock Holmes

Best Supporting Performer in a Play—Hanson Hensley in Sherlock

BroadwayWorld is a

## **Events at the Creative Arts Council of Wells County**

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Lessons will be taught by Alex Cornett, a worship/rock drummer with 25 years of experience. He has toured with several worship bands across the country and overseas, and has played at dozens of churches, both as a fill in and an every week musician. With a degree in audio engineering and a history of studio work, Alex has a unique collection of musical knowledge and technical ability. He is offering beginner, intermediate, and

advanced classes. If you are interested in finding out more, please call the Creative Arts office at (260) 824-5222.

Creative Arts Summer Camps Summer Theater Intensive June 2024

Shrek the Musical JR (Ages 12-18); Auditions: Saturday, May 4th, 2024 (must be age 12 by March 1st); Rehearsals: June 3 – 14; Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Performances: June 14 at 7 p.m. and June 15th at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.; (Attendance is required at all 10 days of camp plus all 3 performances); Tuition:

Disney The Jungle Book Kids (Ages 8-11); Auditions: Saturday, May 11, 2024 (must be age 8 by March 1st); Rehearsals: June 17-18; Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to Noon; Performances: June 28 at 7 p.m. and June 29 at 3 p.m.; (Attendance is required at all 10 days of camp plus both performances); Tuition: \$100 Summer Dance Intensive

Registration Opens – March 1, 2024; Dates: June 3-21, 2024

**Creative Movement** (Ages 3-5); For 3-5 year old students, the 45 minute Creative Movement class meets twice a week for three weeks.

Choose 1 session; Tuesday and Thurs-

Session A from 10:00 to 10:45 a.m. Session B from 10:45 to 11:30 a.m. Tuition: \$50

**Pre-Dance** (Ages 6-8); The Pre-Dance class is geared toward 6-8 year old stu-



dents. Students will take two 45 minute classes (one in ballet and one dance elective) twice a week for three weeks. Tuesday and Thursday from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Tuition: \$90

Continuing Dance (Ages 9-12); For 9-12 year old students, Continuing Dance occurs twice a week for 3 weeks. Students will take two, one hour classes (one in ballet and one dance elective). Tuesday and Thursday from 4:45 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. Tuition: \$120

Intermediate/Advanced Class; For students that have reached an intermediate to advanced level of classical ballet. Students will take 1.5 to 2.5 hours of class three times a week for three weeks. Classes offered will included ballet, pointe, and contemporary dance styles.

Monday from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Friday from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuition: \$190

**Ongoing Activities** 

Creative Crew: Tuesdays from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.: All forms of creativity welcome: painting, drawing, needlework and more. Spend the morning working on your craft and socialize with other artists. Enter Door 1 or Door 10 at Life Community Church, the creative crew meets in the cafe

Readers' Brown Bag Luncheon: Meeting the last Tuesday of the month at noon at Life Community Church, enter door 10. All readers are welcome. Feel free to call the office for more information...

\*\*\*Important Scheduling Note: Changes can occur after the Creative Happenings column has been published. Please confirm dates and times before planning to participate in programs and activities\*\*\*

Creative Arts Council activities are supported by memberships, sponsors and grants from funders including Arts United, a regional agency; the Indiana Arts Commission, a state agency; and the National Endowment for the Arts, a national agency.

House was awarded 12 out of the 19 awards presented at the regional 2023 BroadwayWorld Awards event in the Fort Wayne area.

Favorite Local Theater

Best Director of a Musical—Cynthia Smyth Wartzok for Into the Woods

Woods

Best Costume Design—

Woods

Henly for Into the Woods

Irregulars

Best Ensemble—Sher-

theatre news website based in New York City covering Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional and international theatre productions.

# Special Feature

## Tax breaks aging taxpayers may be eligible for

with many perks for those who are open to exploring the benefits. In addition to senior discounts on movies, meals and more, moving into one's golden years could offer some breaks when it comes to taxes and finances.

It is always best to go over tax- and financerelated plans with an accountant or certified financial planner to figure out what is in your best interest. However, generally speaking, here are some potential age-related tax perks.

#### **Increase retirement** savings

Older individuals can contribute more to employer-sponsored retirement accounts and Roth or traditional individual retirement accounts (IRAs), according to AARP. For 2023, the contribution limit for employees who participate in 401(k) and 403(b) programs, most 457 retirement savings plans and Thrift Savings Plan through the U.S. Federal

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their contributions to \$22,500 - a jump of\$2,000 from last year. Those over age 50 can maximize contributions even more, up to a total of \$30,000.

#### Larger standard

deduction The Balance Money says for tax year 2022, people age 65 or older can add an extra \$1.750 to the standard deduction they're eligible for if they are unmarried and not a surviving spouse. Those who are married and file joint returns can add \$1,400. For tax year 2023, those amounts go up to \$1,850 and \$1,500. In addition, the standard eligible deductions increased. Most older taxpayers feel the bigger standard deduction plus the extra standard deduction is more than any itemized deductions they

Reduce taxable income The ability to contribute more to tax-def-

> Individual Taxes Corporation Taxes

Partnership Taxes

Property Taxes

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Quickbook ProAdvisor

can claim and choose this

option when filing their

Government can increase ered retirement accounts enables older adults to reduce their taxable incomes. This, in turn, reduces the amount that needs to be spent on income taxes.

#### **Changes in filing** threshold

According to The Arbor Company, which oversees senior living communities, the filing threshold is the income that must be made before being required to file a tax return. Typical taxpayers who are either employees or retired and drawing pensions or Social Security find the threshold increases over age 65. Single filers over age 65 do not need to file returns if their incomes are \$14,050 or under. Married filers over age 65 have a threshold of \$27,400. If primary or sole income comes from Social Security or a pension, those over age 65 may not have to file returns at all.

#### Elderly or disabled tax credit

Differing from deductions, a credit for taxpayers is available to people age 65 or older or retired persons on permanent and total disability who receive taxable disability income for the tax year, according to the Internal Revenue Service. In addition, this credit is for those who have an adjusted gross income or the total of nontaxable Social Security, pensions, annui-

ties, or disability income under specific limits. The eligibility levels change from year to year. Credits range from \$3,750 to \$7,500.

These are some of the tax breaks American seniors can expect when filing their income tax returns. Speak with an accountant and financial planner about other perks that come with aging. Individuals also can visit www.irs.gov for further information.

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## Iowa's Caitlin Clark breaks Pete Maravich's NCAA Division I scoring record at 3,668

**AP Sports Writer** 

Maravich's record fell four days afCaitlin Clark stood alone at the freethrow line on Sunday and made the foul shots that put her atop

the all-time NCAA Division I scoring chart.

The flash and pizzazz of her game have made her the biggest name in all of college basketball. Yet it was two free throws after a technical foul that pushed Clark past the late Pete Maravich's 54-year-old record in No. 6 Iowa's 93-83 win over No. 2 Ohio State.

**Caitlin Clark** Clark entered the game in Iowa City needing 18 points to pass Maravich's total of 3,667, amassed in just 83 games over three seasons at LSU (1967-70). She finished with 35 to run her total to 3,685 in 130 games.

Maravich's mark fell four days after Clark broke Lynette Woodard's major college women's record when she scored 33 points against Minnesota on

"Just to be in the same realm of all these players who have been so successful, whether it's Pete or Kelsey Plum or Lynette Woodard — all these people have just given so much to the game," Clark said. "Hopefully somebody comes after me and breaks my records and I can be there supporting them."

Best known for her long 3-pointers, Clark was called on to go to the foul line after Cotie McMahon was assessed a technical for giving her a little push during a dead ball with less than a second to go in the first half.

Clark had no immediate reaction after the second shot went through, as if it hadn't sunk in yet. She said she knew the record had fallen only after it

It didn't matter to her that she made history with two free throws rather than a half-court logo 3-pointer.

'That's like the hardest thing to do in basketball is to make free throws with nobody (around you) at the freethrow line," she said.

She had gotten off to a slow start Sunday. Her first shot was a 3-pointer that bounced off the rim. She missed a layup and from deep on the right wing before making a 3 from the left side for her first basket.

After starting 2 for 7, she made 3 of her next 4 shots — including three straight 3s, each deeper than

Woodard was among

those at Carver-Hawkeye Arena to help Clark celebrate senior day. Also on hand were basketball great Maya Moore, who was Clark's favorite player, and Baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan

"It's a great time for women's basketball," Woodard said in a television interview.

"Caitlin is leading the way. As she was chipping away, I said records are made to be broken. Also, they're made to be honored. Because of her, my records are being honored. She's gone beyond that now, she's gone beyond Pete ... I passed her the baton to go ahead and burst through that ceiling, and I'm so happy for her."

On Thursday, Clark announced she would enter the 2024 WNBA draft and skip the fifth year of eligibility available to athletes who competed during the COVID-19 pandemic. She is projected to be the No. 1 overall pick by the Indiana Fever, and the WNBA already is seeing a rise in ticket sales.

Logitix, which researches prices on ticket resale platforms, reported an average sale price of \$598 for a ticket to Sunday's game purchased since Feb. 1.

Kiran Nanjappa, who was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and now lives in Denver, said he paid more than \$200 for his ticket.

"She's a truly once-in-a-lifetime player," he said. "I've been watching Iowa basketball for 40 years, and I've never seen a player like her, men's or women's. I'll just say this — I paid more to see her today than I paid to see Michael Jordan three times at the end of his career. And I never thought I'd

Clark is all but assured of one or two more appearances at the arena in Iowa City. Iowa is projected to be a No. 2 seed for the NCAA Tournament, meaning it would be at home for the

Pearl Moore of Francis Marion owns the overall women's record with 4,061 points from 1975-79 at the small-college level in the AIAW. Moore had 177 points at Anderson Junior College before enrolling at Francis Marion.

Clark is 376 points behind Moore, and she has two to nine more games left in an Iowa uniform, depending on how far the Hawkeyes advance in the

Big Ten and NCAA tournaments.
The fall of Maravich's record is subject to scrutiny.

Maravich's all-time scoring mark is one of the more remarkable in sports history. There was no shot clock or 3-point line in his era. The 3-point line was adopted in 1986.

Maravich averaged 44.2 points per game. He scored more than 60 in a game four times, topping out at 69 against Alabama on Feb. 7, 1970.

LSU coach Kim Mulkey, who grew up in Louisiana and played at Louisiana Tech, said after her team's win over Kentucky on Sunday that comparing Maravich and Clark would be like comparing apples and oranges.

"What Clark has done is unbelievable and her name will be right up there at the top," Mulkey said. "But he played over here with no 3-point line, three years, and I don't think we need to make too much of, 'Well, she passed him because he's a man.' She's who she is, and that's awesome. Lord knows when I (coached) against her: 'Are you kidding me? What a generational talent.'

Clark averages 28.3 points for her career. Her biggest output was 49 points against Michigan on Feb. 15, when she passed Kelsey Plum as the NCAA women's Division I career scoring leader.

Clark has 55 games with at least 30 points, the most of any player in men's or women's college basketball over the last 25 years. She has six triple-doubles this season and 17 in her career.

"What Caitlin's done has been amazing. She's fantastic player, great for the women's game and basketball in general," Maravich's eldest son, Jaeson, told The Associated Press last

## Knights earn 4 spots on all-NE8 hoops list

The Northeast 8 Conference released its selections for the 2023-24 boys' basketball awards Sunday night. Norwell, who finished third in the conference, had

four total players honored. On the first team was forward Ashton Federspiel

and guard Cohen Bailey.

Federspiel was the team leader in scoring, earning 17.4 points and 5.5 rebounds per game, with a 46% shooting percentage from the floor.

Bailey averaged 10.3 points per game while dishing out four assists and 3.4 rebounds per game.

Adam McBride was on the second team, while Cade Shelted received an honorable mention. McBride had a breakout year in his first full varsity

season. He helped the Knights with 9.9 points per contest and a sharp 39% clip from three.

Shelton was the team's leading rebounder, averaging 5.7 per night and six points per game.

Columbia City and Bellmont were the two top teams in the NE8, splitting the title with 6-1 records. Norwell was second at 5-2, East Noble fourth at 4-2, Leo fifth (3-4), Huntington North sixth (2-5) and tied for last were New Haven and DeKalb (1-6).

## NWMS swimming & diving defeats Jets

Norwell's swim and dive teams topped Adam Central Thursday night at home.

The boys won 105-34, while the girls won 115-11. First-place finishers were:

#### **Boys**

- Greyson Chavis in the diving events.
- Grant Keller in the 50-yard freestyle.
- Riley Hank in the 50-yard butterfly.
- Ben Peterson in the 100-yard backstroke. Oakleaf, Arnold, Tyler Žent and Bunn in the 300-
- yard freestyle relay. • Rodgers, Hank, Zent and M. Zent in the 200-yard
- Rodgers, Wireman, Reinhard and Bunn in the 200-
- yard medley relay.

#### **Girls**

- Katlyn Troutt in the diving events.
- Mia Kurtz in the 100-yard IM. • Emma Easley in the 50-yard freestyle.
- Lilly Holmes in the 50-yard butterfly.
- Kate Collins in the 100-yard freestyle.
- Josie Alig in the 100-yard backstroke. Reagan Wilson in the 100-yard breaststroke.
- Collins, Mialkowski, Holmes and Kurtz in the
- 200-yard medley relay. • Easley, Cullar, Collins and Mialkowski in the 200-
- yard freestyle relay. · Mialkowski, Swineford, Kurtz and Hoopingarner
- in the 300-yard freestyle relay.

NWMS tops Warriors,

The Norwell Middle School wrestling team defeated

In the first match against Harding, the Knights won 48-0 and the second 24-18 over Woodlan.

**Individual winners vs. Harding** 

Individual winners vs Woodlan

Harding in wrestling

Harding and Woodlan Thursday night.

• Fielder Brege by fall at 102.

• Royce Merrin by fall at 125.

Chase Gerber by fall at 132.

Carter Kelley by fall at 140.

Camden Connett by fall at 160.

• Lincoln Moyer by fall at 105.

• Ty Tofflemoyer by fall at 220.

• Charles Simerman by fall at 80.

Crete Edwards by dall at 90.

• Miles Kelly by fall at 110.

Clayton Parsons by fall at 95.

• Colton Huss by fall at 150.

## Kyle Larson again wins at Las Vegas to keep Chevrolet undefeated on NASCAR season



AP Auto Racing Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) -There's a tradition at Hendrick Motorsports to ring the winning bell throughout the North Carolina shop after every NASCAR victory.

As motivation to have the best year of his career, Kyle Larson's team decided to bring a bell on the road so avoid having to wait to return to Charlotte to celebrate every achievement he plans for this sea-

The bell got its first ring Sunday when Larson won his second consecutive race at Las Vegas Motor Speedway to keep keep Chevrolet undefeated and give Rick Hendrick his second victory in the first three NASCAR Cup Series races of the season.

Hendrick Motorsports is celebrating its 40th anniversary this season and opened the year with William Byron winning the Daytona 500.

"That bell will travel with us every week and we'll be ringing it loud and proud," Larson said.

Larson won for the third time in his career at Las Vegas, where in 2021 he got his first win driving for Hendrick following a nearly yearlong suspension in 2020. Larson also won in the No. 5 Chevy at Las Vegas last October in the playoffs.

Larson held off Tyler Reddick for his 24th career Cup victory. In a Toyota for 23XI Racing, Reddick chased Larson for the final several laps but could never find enough room to make a move for

the pass. Larson's margin of victory was 0.441 seconds over Reddick.

"I knew Tyler was going to be the guy to beat from the first stage. He was really fast there,' Larson said. "Cool to get a win here at Vegas again. Back-to-back, swept all the stages again. Can't ask for more than that."

Reddick was extremely frustrated after finishing second and believed Larson as the leader controlled the race because of the rules of NASCAR's new car.

"Kyle did a really good job there taking away pretty much every option I had there to close the gap," Reddick said. "Second sucks, that is for sure. You have to run up front all day long, and when asked about what we need to do to get better, that's the very thing, and we didn't do it. We were pretty evenly matched, so I don't know if there was anything that I really could've done to get around him.

"He would have had to make a big mistake or had some traffic kind of knock his wind around. It's a solid effort for our team, that's how we need to run, but I don't like running

Chevrolet also has wins this year by Byron in the Daytona 500 and Daniel Suarez last week at Atlanta for Trackhouse Racing. Chevrolet has won eight of nine national series races to open the year.

Ford and Toyota are both using new cars this

The Chevrolet contingent right now is as tight

as it's ever been, and the key partner groups and even outside of that are working really good together because we know we have very little margin here," said Hendrick team president and general manager Jeff Andrews. know we're up against a new car with Ford and Toyota. We have to do our best to work together and keep advancing this car.

"We're obviously early on in the season here, a lot of racing to go, and they will get there. Anytime that you change a platform on those cars as much as they've had, it's going to

take a little bit of time. Reigning NASCAR champion Ryan Blaney was third for Team Penske in a Ford, followed by Trackhouse driver Ross Chastain, Ty Gibbs in a Toyota for Joe Gibbs Racing and Las Vegas native Noah Gragson was sixth in his best finish since joining Stewart-Haas Racing.

Martin Truex Jr. for JGR was seventh, followed by teammate Denny Hamlin, Penske driver and pole-sitter Joey Logano and Byron. Suarez, last week's winner, was 11th.

Larson swept all three stages and led 181 of the 267 laps. The win made Larson the Cup Series points leader with an eight-point cushion over Blaney.

#### **BUESCHER PENALTY** TO COME

Chris Buescher and RFK Racing are facing penalties after a tire fell off Buescher's Ford early in the race.

"We lost the nut and lost half the wheel. I think the tire stayed up under

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to Bummies

the fender," Buescher said. "It looks like the nut came off and something in the suspension actually cut the wheel in half.

The penalty will be the suspension of two crew members from Buescher's team for the next two

#### **DRIVE FOR**

**DIVERSITY SUCCESS** Larson's win continued a streak of success for graduates of NASCAR's Drive for Diversity program.

It started when Nick Sanchez won the Truck Series race to open the season at Daytona, and then Suarez won the Cup Series race last week at

Rajah Caruth became only the third Black driver to win at NASCAR's national level with a win in Friday night's Truck Series race at Las Vegas and now Larson, who is of Japanese descent, won the Cup race.

"The D4D program was good for my career. Kind of gave me my introduction into stock car racing and gained a lot of experience, not only on the racetrack but off of it, as well," Larson said. "I'm sure it's changed quite a bit since 2012, but regardless, they've produced some great drivers, and it's cool

"Hopefully, we can add some more D4D guys on to the new championship list down the road.

#### **UP NEXT**

NASCAR goes next week to Phoenix Raceway, where Byron is the defending race winner. Chastain won in November on the day Blaney won his first Cup title.

## Purdue beats MSU, winning its second straight Big Ten title

**By CHRIS GOFF Associated Press** 

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (AP) — Zach Edey had 32 points and 11 rebounds, Braden Smith added 23 points and nine boards, and No. 2 Purdue beat Michigan State 80-74 on Saturday night to clinch a share of the Big Ten regular-season championship.

Gold confetti fell from the Mackey Arena rafters as Purdue celebrated its conference-best 26th title. With a win in either of their final two games, the Boilermakers (26-3, 15-3) would claim a second straight outright regular-season crown.

"A great accomplishment to win back-to-back," Purdue coach Matt Painter said. "It's hard. You play 20 (conference) games. Just happy for our entire team, but really our seniors. They've done things the right way."

The last Big Ten team to win back-to-back outright regularseason titles was Ohio State in 2006 and 2007.

Michigan State (17-12, 9-9) shot just 39% and has lost three straight. Tyson Walker had 14 points and seven rebounds, Jaden Akins scored 13, Malik Hall added 12 and Xavier Book-

Spartans coach Tom Izzo was asked if the performance made him feel better about the state of his team.





No events scheduled

## **Purdue tops MSU**

(Continued from Page 6)

"It's a loaded question and a tough question," he said. "I was pleased we competed. If we would have done that in the last two weeks, we would have won three more games, and that's my fault. I've got a good team. I'm not saying it's great; it's good.'

Fletcher Loyer finished with 15 points for Purdue, which has won 16 in a row at home. Loyer made four 3-pointers after hitting just nine the entire month of February.

"I'm glad he found his shot back," Smith

The Boilermakers ran out to a 15-point lead on Edey's three-point play with 14:26 to go, but Michigan State had an answer. A.J. Hoggard drained an open 3-pointer from the left wing to trim the deficit to 58-55, prompting a timeout by Painter with 9:13 remaining.

Out of the break, Smith knocked down a 3 and Purdue held steady from there. Michigan State never got closer than five in the final three minutes. Mason Gillis' 3 with 56.3 seconds remaining extended Purdue's lead to

"We've got a great team," Gillis said. "It's great (to clinch a share of the Big Ten regularseason title). It's even better to do it with a great group of guys.'

Izzo called a timeout with 1:46 left in the first half after Edey scored eight points in just more than two minutes to turn a 28-27 deficit into a 35-30 Purdue lead.

Smith then drained a 3 on the other end for a 38-30 advantage, Purdue's largest to that point after it had trailed by eight early. Walker knocked down a 3 as time expired in the first half to send the Spartans to the locker room down 38-35.

#### **BIG PICTURE**

Purdue: Barring an unexpected collapse, the Boilermakers appear headed for a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament for the second consecutive year. Purdue picked up its 10th Quad 1 win, most in the country. Against current members of the AP Top 25, the Boilermakers are 6-0 courtesy of wins over No. 4 Tennessee, No. 5 Marquette, No. 6 Arizona, No. 13 Illinois, No. 14 Alabama and No. 23 Gonzaga.

#### **UP NEXT**

Michigan State: Returns home to face Northwestern on Wednesday night as the Spartans look to avenge an 88-74 loss at Northwestern on Jan. 7.

Purdue: Plays at Illinois on Tuesday night in the Boilermakers' final road game of the

## **High School Calendar**

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

FRIDAY, MARCH 8 No events scheduled **SATURDAY, MARCH 9** TRACK & FIELD (CO-ED): Norwell at Bulldog Invite at Indiana Tech (Warrior Park), 10

## Mgbako scores 24, rallies IU to victory over Maryland

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. (AP) — Sara Scali scored 19 points, Yarden Garzon added 17 and No. 14 Indiana closed the regular season with a 71-54 win over Maryland on Sunday to improve to 15-0 at

The Hoosiers tied sixth-ranked Iowa for second in the Big Ten Conference, one game behind No. 2 Ohio State, but will go into the tournament as the third seed. The tournament starts Wednesday in Minneapolis but the top four seeds have a double-bye into Friday's

Maryland, the No. 7 seed, doesn't play until Thursday against 10th-seeded Wiscon-

Mackenzie Holmes had 11 points for Indiana (24-4, 15-3) and Sydney Parrish and Chloe Moore-McNeil added 10 each. Scalia had eight rebounds, Moore-McNeil had eight assists and Parrish, who started her career at Oregon, surpassed 1,000 points for her career.

Jakia Brown-Turner had 15 points and 13 rebounds for Maryland (17-12, 9-9), Bri McDaniel added 13 points and Shyann Cel-

Garzon and Scalia both went 4 of 8 from 3-point range but the Hoosiers, who lead the country at 41.1%, were just 8 of 24 from long range. Their 44.2% overall shooting (23 of 52) is also below their leading 51.8%.

A sharp-shooting first half was enough to

Indiana never trailed but in an unusual first quarter the teams had consecutive 12-0 runs. Holmes and Scalia had three-point plays and Garzon two 3-pointers to give the Hoosiers a 16-2 lead. Brown-Turner had two 3s to help bring the Terps within 16-14.

Scalia answered with a 3 and Holmes had a layup to put Indiana on top 21-14 after one

Indiana led 39-24 at halftime, thanks to a 15-0 run that included two layups by Holmes, followed by two 3s for Garzon and Scalia's 3-pointer that made it 36-15.

Indian shot 54% (15 of 28) with seven 3s in the half, while Maryland was 2 of 11 behind the arc and shot 29% overall (10 of

A basket by Holmes gave Indiana a 50-31 lead midway through third quarter but late in the quarter she limped off the court and went to the locker room. The Hoosiers' all-time leading scorer returned to the bench with about a minute left in the Senior Day game and walked without a limp during the postgame celebration.

Indiana lost Holmes' replacement Lilly Meister when she landed on a Maryland player and hurt her foot with about 3 1/2 minutes to play. Seconds later McDaniel hit a 3-pointer that had the Terrapins within 13 but they never got closer.

## **News-Banner Scoreboard**

#### <u>BASKETBALL</u> **High School**

Monday Boys' Scores IHSAA Sectionals Championship E. Chicago Central
 East Chicago Central 56, Munster

2. Chesterton

Crown Point 68, Chesterton 36 3. Mishawaka Mishawaka 45, S. Bend Riley 43, OT 4. Elkhart

Warsaw 46, Penn 34 6. Homestead Ft. Wayne Wayne 76, Homestead 7. Lafayette Jeff Kokomo 79, Marion 54

8. Noblesville Fishers 49, Noblesville 47 9. Greenfield New Palestine 60, Greenfield 48 10. Lawrence North Lawrence North 75, Indpls Cathe-

11. Southport Indpls Ben Davis 50, Indpls Ron-12. Terre Haute South Avon 49, Terre Haute North 41

13. Bloomington North Center Grove 71, Martinsville 30 E. Central Franklin 41, E. Central 34

15. Seymour Jeffersonville 75, New Albany 58 16. Evansville North Evansville Harrison 49, Jasper 33
Class 3A

17. Calumet Hammond Noll 44, Hanover Central 42 18. Tippecanoe Valley Glenn 35, Tippecanoe Valley 30 19. S. Bend Washington S. Bend St. Joseph's 81, S. Bend

Clay 47 20. Lakeland Fairfield 50, NorthWood 39 21. Woodlan Ft. Wayne Concordia 62, Leo 58

W. Lafayette 45, Twin Lakes 43 23. Mississinewa Peru 48, Mississinewa 44 24. New Castle Delta 55, Yorktown 44 25. Lebanon Danville 57, Tri-West 49 26. Owen Valley Northview 60, Edgewood 53

Guerin Catholic Guerin Catholic 75, Indy Brebeuf 74, 20T 28. Beech Grove Indpls Washington 67, Christel House Manual 48

29. Greensburg
Batesville 44, Lawrenceburg 36 30. Scottsburg Scottsburg 65, Silver Creek 59 31. Princeton Southridge 53, Princeton 43

Boonville Evansville Bosse 72, Evansville Memorial 63 Class 2A

34. N. Judson N. Judson 59, Hebron 50 35. Westview Westview 51, Churubusco 39 36. Cass Wabash 65, Cass 39

37. Bluffton Ft. Wavne Blackhawk 58. Ft. Wayne Luers 50 38. Lafayette Catholic Lafayette Catholic 54, Carroll (Flora) 47

39. Tipton Tipton 50, Taylor 38 40. Alexandria Wapahani 59, Monroe Central 26 41. Hagerstown Northeastern 43, Union Co. 41 42. Triton Central

Indpls Irvington 43, Eastern Hancock 35 43. Sheridan Indpls Park Tudor 63, University

44. Greencastle Parke Heritage 49, N. Putnam 34 45. S. Ripley Switzerland Co. 58, Hauser 57 46. Southwestern (Hanover) Brownstown 53, Providence 37 47. Paoli 47. Paoli Sullivan 60, South Knox 50 48. Forest Park Forest Park 52, N. Posey 46 Class 1A

50. Triton Michigan City Marquette 57, Westville 44 51. Bethany Christian Elkhart Christian 47, Lakewood

52. Caston Tri-County 47, Caston 40 53. Southern Wells Ft. Wayne Canterbury 52, North-

54. Fountain Central N. Vermillion 52, Rossville 35 55. Tri-Central Liberty Christian 63, Cowan 52 56. Blue River Valley Seton Catholic 38, Blue River Val-

57. White River Valley Clay City 50, Bloomfield 30 58. Bethesda Christian Bethesda Christian 58, Indpls Metro 47

59. Indpls Lutheran Greenwood Christian 49, Indpls Lutheran 46 60. Edinburgh Oldenburg 47, Jac-Cen-Del 36 61. Borden Christian Academy 53, S. Central

Christian Academy 53, S. Central (Elizabeth) 48 62. New Washington Trinity Lutheran 49, New Wash-ington 33 63. Loogootee Barr-Reever 75, Orleans 67, 40T

Evansville Christian 62, Wood Memorial 45

64. Tecumseh

College Men's Basketball Scores Saturday, Mar. 2 EAST

Colgate 63, Lehigh 60 Fairleigh Dickinson 57, Wagner 54
Pittsburgh 90, Boston College 65
Texas Tech 81, West Virginia 70
Teledo 85, Buffelo 70 Toledo 85, Buffalo 79 Villanova 71, Providence 60 Xavier 98, Georgetown 93 Yale 80, Harvard 60

SOUTH Auburn 78, Mississippi St. 63 Duke 73, Virginia 48 FAU 79, Tulane 73 FIU 85, W. Kentucky 83 Georgia Tech 85, Florida St. 76 lowa St. 60, UCF 52 Kentucky 111, Arkansas 102 LSU 75, Vanderbilt 61 North Carolina 79, NC State 70 Samford 92, The Citadel 80 South Carolina 82, Florida 76 Syracuse 82, Louisville 76 Tennessee 81, Alabama 74 Texas A&M 70, Georgia 56 Virginia Tech 87, Wake Forest 76

MIDWEST Akron 80, N. Illinois 73 Butler 82, DePaul 63 Cincinnati 74, Kansas St. 72 Cleveland St. 75, IUPUI 66 Creighton 89, Marquette 75 Fort Wayne 83, Robert Morris 65 Illinois 91, Wisconsin 83 Iowa 87, Northwestern 80 Kent St. 79, Cent. Michigan 73, OT Miami (Ohio) 52, E. Michigan 37 Minnesota 75, Penn St. 70 Mississippi 84, Missouri 78 Notre Dame 69, Clemson 62 Oakland 75, Detroit 70
Purdue 80, Michigan St. 74
W. Michigan 78, Ball St. 76, OT
SOUTHWEST
Baylor 82, Kansas 74

Houston 87, Oklahoma 85 Texas 81, Oklahoma St. 65 FAR WEST Arizona 103, Oregon 83

BYU 87, TCU 75 Boise St. 89, New Mexico 79 Gonzaga 70, Saint Mary's (Cal.) 57 Southern Cal 82, Washington 75 Utah 88 California 59 Washington St. 77, UCLA 65

Sunday, Mar. 3 EAST Indiana 83, Maryland 78 UConn 91, Seon Hall 61 SOUTH Belmont 83, Evansville 66 Memphis 106, UAB 87 MIDWEST

Drake 74, Bradley 66 Indiana St. 89 Murray St. 77 Ohio St. 84, Michigan 61 Valparaiso 75, Illinois St. 72

Women's Basketball Scores Sunday, Mar. 3 EAST

Monmouth (NJ) 66, Hofstra 50 Northeastern 64, Hampton 60 Northwestern 72, Rutgers 61 Penn St. 90, Minnesota 34 Villanova 68, DePaul 66 SOUTH Auburn 77, Florida 74

Auburn 77, Florida 74
Belmont 80, Evansville 55
Florida St. 82, Clemson 79, OT
Georgia Tech 71, Miami 66, OT
LSU 77, Kentucky 56
Mississippi 87, Arkansas 43
Mississippi St. 90, Missouri 75
NC State 75, Wake Forest 57
Narth Gersling 67, Buke 57 North Carolina 63, Duke 59 South Carolina 76, Tennessee 68 Vanderbilt 72, Georgia 55 Virginia 80, Virginia Tech 75 MIDWEST

Illinois 74, Nebraska 73 Indiana 71, Maryland 54 Iowa 93, Ohio St. 83 Michigan St. 78, Wisconsin 52 Notre Dame 74, Louisville 58 SOUTHWEST Alabama 78, Texas A&M 71 Baylor 67, Oklahoma St. 45

Saturday, Mar. 2 Ball St. 75, E. Michigan 47

NBA EASTERN CONFERENCE Atlantic Division L Pct

GB

Boston	48	12	.800	_
New York	36	25	.590	121/
Philadelphia	35	25	.583	13
Brooklyn		36	.400	24
Toronto	23	38	.377	251/
South	east	Divi	sion	
	W	L	Pct	GE
Orlando	35	26	.574	_
Miami	34	26	.567	1/3
Atlanta	26	34	.433	81/
Charlotte	15	46	.246	20
Washington	9	51	.150	251/
Cent	ral D	ivisi	on	
	W	L	Pct	GE
Milwaukee	40	21	.656	_
Cleveland	39	21	.650	1/
	34			61/
Chicago	28	32	.467	111/
Detroit	9	51	.150	301/
WESTER	N CO	NFE	RENC	E
South	west	Divi	sion	
	w	L	Pct	GE

New Orleans 36 25 .590 2 9½ 34 26 20 13 Dallas Houston Memphis San Antonio 16 23 **Northwest Division** 18 Pct .695 GB Oklahoma City41 19 19 .689 Minnesota Denver

\_\_ 15 34 42 +443
Pacific Division
W L Pct
L.A. Clippers 39 20 .661
Phoenix 35 25 500
Sacraments Phoenix 35 Sacramento 34 Golden State 32 L.A. Lakers 33 4½ 5 7½ 7½ 7½ 25 25 28 29 .532 Saturday's Games Brooklyn 114, Atlanta 102 Miami 126, Utah 120

Portland 107, Memphis 100, OT Houston 118, Phoenix 109 Sunday's Games
Philadelphia 120, Dallas 116
Boston 140, Golden State 88
L.A. Clippers 89, Minnesota 88

Orlando 113, Detroit 91
Toronto 111, Charlotte 106
New York 107, Cleveland 98
San Antonio 117, Indiana 105
Oklahoma City at Phoenix, 9:30

Monday's Games Memphis at Brooklyn, 7:30 p.m. L.A. Clippers at Milwaukee, 8 p.m. Portland at Minnesota, 8 p.m. Washington at Utah, 9 p.m. Chicago at Sacramento, 10 p.m. Oklahoma City at L.A. Lakers, 10:30

Tuesday's Games
Orlando at Charlotte, 7 p.m.
Atlanta at New York, 7:30 p.m.
Boston at Cleveland, 7:30 p.m. Detroit at Miami, 7:30 p.m. New Orleans at Toronto, 7:30 p.m. Philadelphia at Brooklyn, 7:30 p.m. San Antonio at Houston, 8 p.m. Indiana at Dallas, 8:30 p.m. Phoenix at Denver, 10 p.m.

Wednesday's Games

Orlando at Washington, 7 p.m.
Cleveland at Atlanta, 7:30 p.m.
L.A. Clippers at Houston, 7:30 p.m.
Memphis at Philadelphia, 7:30 p.m. Chicago at Utah. 9 p.m. Milwaukee at Golden State, 10 p.m. Oklahoma City at Portland, 10 p.m. Sacramento at L.A. Lakers, 10:30

#### **HOCKEY**

NHL **EASTERN CONFERENCE Atlantic Division** 

**GP W L OTPts GF GA** 61 41 16 4 86202 145 61 41 16 4 86202 145 62 35 13 14 84208 174 60 35 17 8 78224 190 61 33 22 6 72216 195 y63 33 24 6 72214 213 62 29 29 4 62183 187 Tampa Bay63 33 24 61 23 28 10 56173 219 59 25 31 3 53195 212

Metropolitan Division

GP W L OTPts GF GA

N.Y. Rangers614017 4 84204 168

Carolina 61 36 19 6 78201 172

Philadelphia6232 23 7 71189 184 N.Y. Islanders60262014 66180201 Washington6028 23 New Jersey6130 27 9 65160 193 4 64202 214 Pittsburgh 58 27 23 8 62173 160 Columbus 60 20 30 10 50178 220 **WESTERN CONFERENCE** 

Central Division

GP W L OTPts GF GA

Winnipeg 60 39 16 5 83187 144

Dallas 63 37 17 9 83225 190 Colorado 62 37 20 Nashville 62 35 25 5 79227 194 2 72199 190 St. Louis 60 31 26 Minnesota 62 29 27 3 65174 186 61 25 31 5 55180 201 Arizona 61 15 41 5 3 5 35125 218 Chicago

GP W L OTPts GF GA Vancouver 62 38 17 7 83222 175 2 74206 171 7 73198 179 Edmonton 58 36 20 Vegas 61 33 21 Los Angeles6031 19 10 72188 162 Calgary 60 30 25 5 65189 187 Seattle 60 26 23 11 63166 171 Anaheim 60 22 35 3 47161 214 San Jose 60 15 39 6 36129 235 NOTE: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to

Saturday's Games Winnipeg 5, Carolina 3 Florida 4, Detroit 0 Edmonton 2 Seattle 1 Nashville 5, Colorado 1 St. Louis 3, Minnesota 1 Buffalo 7, Vegas 2 Philadelphia 4, Ottawa 2 N.Y. Islanders 5, Boston 1 Tampa Bay 4, Montreal 3, SO Toronto 4, N.Y. Rangers 3, SO Columbus 5, Chicago 2 Dallas 3, San Jose 2, SO Calgary 4, Pittsburgh 3
Sunday's Games
Arizona 5, Washington 2
Los Angeles 5, New Jersey 1

Winnipeg 5, Buffalo 2
Minnesota 4, San Jose 3
Vancouver at Anaheim, 8 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Edmonton, 9 p.m.

Monday's Games
Boston at Toronto, 7 p.m.
Florida at N.Y. Rangers, 7 p.m. St. Louis at Philadelphia, 7 p.m. Vegas at Columbus, 7 p.m. Chicago at Colorado, 9 p.m. Seattle at Calgary, 9:30 p.m. Tuesday's Games
Columbus at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Florida at New Jersey, 7 p.m.
Edmonton at Boston, 7:30 p.m.
St. Louis at N.Y. Islanders, 7:30

p.m. Montreal at Nashville, 8 p.m. Seattle at Winnipeg, 8 p.m. Chicago at Arizona, 9 p.m. Dallas at San Jose, 10:30 p.m Vancouver at Los Angeles, 10:30

Wednesday's Games Buffalo at Toronto, 7 p.m. Detroit at Colorado, 9:30 p.m. Ottawa at Anaheim, 10 p.m.

#### **BASEBALL**

Saturday's Games (Spring Training)
Baltimore 7, N.Y. Yankees 3
Houston 7, St. Louis 1
Pittsburgh 7, Detroit 3
Texas 14, Chicago White Sox 3
Kansas City 13, Cleveland 12
L.A. Dodders (Ss.) 8, Chicago L.A. Dodgers (ss) 8, Chicago Colorado 10, Cincinnati 4

Sunday's Games
Detroit 7, N.Y. Yankees 2
St. Louis vs Miami (ss) at Jupiter, Fla., canc. Kansas City 7, Cincinnati 3

#### Eckroat leads by stroke, after rain sends Cognizant to Monday finish PALM BEACH GAR-Van Rooyen started the He finished at 14-under 270,

DENS, Fla. (AP) — Austin Eckroat left PGA National with a share of the lead Saturday. He left with the outright lead Sunday.

He'll have to come back Monday to finish the job.

A Monday finish awaits at PGA National, after the final round of the opening event on the PGA Tour's Florida Swing was interrupted by thunderstorms that brought nearly 2 inches of rain in a hurry Sunday afternoon and forced everyone off the course for  $3 \frac{1}{2}$ 

Eckroat was the leader at 15 under through seven holes, one shot ahead of Erik van Rooven - who roared up the leaderboard by opening his round with six consecutive birdies on his way to an 8-under 63. holes).

and now waits to see what'll "Just a weird day," Eck-

roat told Golf Channel. It's the first time the tour event at PGA National -

known as the Honda Classic until this year — will have a Monday finish since Van Rooyen is alone in

second, and Jake Knapp the winner last week in Mexico — was 5 under on his day through 15 holes, ending Sunday at 13 under and alone in third, two shots

Billy Horschel (5 under through 17) was in the group at 12 under, along with Keith Mitchell (65), Shane Lowry (who completed five holes) and Alex Noren (who completed 12

day tied for 31st and seven shots off the 54-hole lead that was shared by Lowry, David Skinns and Eckroat but needed only eight holes to catch them. He was 8 under on the day through 11 holes and the outright leader when the rain came, but even par following the

"Being that far back, you know you have to make a run at it," van Rooyen said. "The course is playing so soft right now. Getting off to a great start was awesome, but the rain delay probably didn't help me much. I had so much momentum."

And plans to play in the Seminole Pro-Am on Monday morning might have to be on hold; PGA National might be where he heads instead, just in case.



## Are my hygiene standards really too high?

Dear Annie: How can I get people you want to parwho visit me to wash their hands after they use the bathroom? I have provided pump soap so they don't have to use a bar of soap. I have put in decorative paper towels so they don't have to use them. a cloth towel and a sign that says "Wash your hands.

What else can I do? What can I say to them that won't be insulting or hurt their feelings?

I know they don't wash because they are too fast about coming out, and if I go in after them, the sink is dry and nothing is in the garbage.

I hate it that they then touch everything in my house, and I have to go around disinfecting when they leave.

I am not a fanatic, but this really upsets me. — Grossed Out

Dear Grossed Out: I'm grossed out just reading your letter. You can only bring a horse to water, but you can't force it to drink. If it bothers you that much, then don't invite them back. Or make a comment just like you did in the letter talking about the importance of washing your hands.

Dear Annie: You have printed letters from grandparents who are considering moving away from their grandkids, and I have some advice based on personal experience: DON'T DO IT!

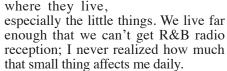
This is my life right now, postretirement. My husband and I lived in the busy boroughs of New York City, where I was happy, and then moved to a less populated area. Our move took us only one hour away from our grandchildren, but it might as well be a million miles away.

My husband loves it, but I feel isolated and bored. There's not a great selection of things to do without factoring in a long drive. The few things that I find enjoyable are seasonal and shortlived. Almost no one comes to visit, so I find myself on the constant driving end, which is draining in itself when

ticipate in daily or

weekly events. My eyes have so many miles on

Before moving, after retirement, couples should pay attention to what they enjoy about



Dear

Annie

by Annie Lane

I long to just hear the radio. I miss the proximity of what I call "civilization" and family and neighborly neighbors. The new neighbors are not neighborly. The entire community keeps to themselves and basically stays indoors; there are no kids playing outdoors. I miss the sight of children playing and signs of life.

Put serious thought into upending your life to move a plane ride away, or even a one-hour drive away. - Regret-

Dear Regretful: Thank you for your letter. I do hope that you and your husband can go to counseling or come up with a better compromise than the one you have now. You should not be that miserable where you are living. Please talk to him. You can always move back somewhere closer and more urban.

"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.

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#### **BEETLE BAILEY**





#### **BLONDIE**







**ZITS** 







**CRANKSHAFT** 







## My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham

Question: There's a website that predicts the future claiming that it's based on cultural trends, environmental changes, and advances in technology. People make no apologies for going to this site for its prophetic sourcing, yet they mock the Bible based on God's truth that has stood the test of time. Isn't this an insult to God?

Answer: It is wise to be cautious about those who claim to have supernatural abilities to predict the future precisely. At best, such schemes are mere guesswork. Often dabbling in this may lead someone into dangerous occult practices. The Bible clearly warns

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Criminal Minds

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## **Only God knows** the future

against such things (see Deuteronomy 18:9-13).

Only God knows the future, but we can certainly learn a great deal about it from the Bible. Over and over through the ages of time, God sent his prophets to the people to warn them of things to come. Rather than be fascinated in man's predictions that fall short, we should be fascinated about what God has done – and is doing – in the world. When we explore the great truths of Scripture, delving into the book of wisdom will open our minds to God's truth and this builds our faith.

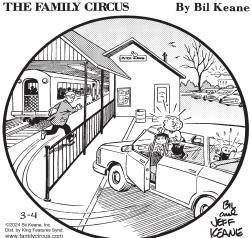
The greatest discovery we can ever make in life is not some prediction, but the reality that that every soul come to salvation in Jesus Christ. For those who repent of sin and trust Him as Savior, they learn to trust the future to Christ — it is in His hand.

We may not know what's in store for us on Earth, but we can find peace in knowing that eternity for those who believe Christ will be glorious. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31, NKJV). Living on Earth with eternity in view brings hope of eternity that guides our steps on Earth.

(This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Graham.)

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"Daddy! You f'got to kiss PJ!"

The LOCKHORNS



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#### **NOTICE**

#### **Notices**

HAVING AN UPCOMING event? A 20 word, line classified ad for six days is only \$24.50. Add a border for an additional \$1 or a graphic for an additional \$5. Contact the Bluffton News-Banner office at 260-824-0224 or 125 N. Johnson St., Bluffton, IN, or online at news-banner.com and click on classifieds.

#### **Lottery Numbers**

Saturday's Drawings HOOSIER LOTTERY Cash 5 - 08-15-20-30-

**Cash4Life** — 05-21-33-44-56, Cash Ball: 03 **Lotto Plus** — 06-18-20-

29-31-33 Quick Draw Midday — 08-10-11-12-15-17-19-36-38-39-47-48-57-59-62-64-

65-66-70-74, BE: 48 Daily Three-Midday 05-04-01, SB: 02

Daily Three-Evening

00-01-06, SB: 06

Daily Four-Midday — 02-02-04-00, SB: 02

Daily Four-Evening — 04-02-07-05, SB: 06

**Quick Draw Evening** 01-05-12-13-15-18-20-22-30-33-49-56-58-60-65-70-71-77-79-80, BE: 01

**Hoosier Lotto** — 06-20-21-24-30-34

**POWERBALL** 03-18-27-36-53; Powerball: 12; Power Play: 2X

**Sunday's Drawings** HOOSIËR LOTTERY Cash 5 - 10-27-33-40-

42 **Cash4Life** — 38-39-46-48-52, Cash Ball: 04

Quick Draw Midday -04-07-08-09-11-14-16-18-26-29-30-35-39-58-65-66-69-70-72-80, BE: 14

Daily Three-Midday -02-07-07, SB: 01 Daily Three-Evening —

03-00-00, SB: 07 Daily Four-Midday —

03-00-06-02, SB: 01 **Daily Four-Evening -**08-06-04-07, SB: 07

**Ouick Draw Evening** 01-05-07-17-20-22-26-27-36-43-45-46-50-52-60-62-64-68-71-73, BE: 22

**Hoosier Lotto** — Estimated jackpot (for Wednesday): \$5.9 million

**MEGA MILLIONS** Estimated jackpot (for Tuesday): \$650 million

**POWERBALL** Estimated jackpot (for Wednesday): \$460 million

#### SUDOKU ANSWER

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HELOISE HINT: To find garage sales in your area. First, check the classified section in your local newspaper. Go online. too. Some communities have websites that list local garage sales in the area. Write to HE-LOISE@Heloise.com.

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## Kamala Harris leads Bloody Sunday memorial marchers

By KIM CHANDLER **Associated Press** 

SELMA, Ala. (AP) — President Kamala Harris told thousands gathered for the 59th anniversary of the Bloody Sunday attacks on civil rights marchers in Selma, Alabama, that fundamental freedoms, including the right to vote, are under attack in America even today.

Harris joined those gathered at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where voting rights activists were beaten back by law enforcement officers in 1965. The vice president praised the marchers' bravery for engaging in a defining moment of the civil rights struggle.

"Today, we know our fight for freedom is not over, because in this moment we are witnessing a full on attack on hard-fought, hard-won freedoms, starting with the freedom that unlocks all others, the freedom to vote," Harris said.

She criticized attempts to restrict voting, including limits on absentee voting and early voting, and said the nation is again at a crossroad.

"What kind of country do we want to live in? Do we want to live in a country of freedom, liberty and justice? Or a country of injustice, hate and fear?" Harris asked, encouraging people to answer with

their vote. She paid tribute to the civil rights marchers who walked across the bridge in 1965 knowing they would face certain violence in seeking "a future that was more equal, more just and more free."

Decisions by the Supreme Court and lower courts since 2006 have weakened the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which was passed in the wake of the police attacks in Selma. The demonstrators were beaten by officers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 7, 1965, as they tried to march across Alabama to support voting rights.

Harris drew parallels between those who worked to stifle the Civil Rights Movement and "extremists" she said are trying to enact restrictions on voting, education and reproductive care.

She said other fundamental freedoms under attack include 'the freedom of a woman to make decisions about her own body," a reference to state abortion bans. She also stressed the Biden administration's support for a six-week ceasefire in Gaza to "get the hostages out and a significant amount of aid in."

Under a blazing blue sky, Harris then led the crowd across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in the march that concludes the annual commemoration. Thousands followed, sometimes singing hymns and anthems of the Civil Rights Movement including, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round."

Earlier Sunday, Attorney General Merrick Garland spoke at a Selma church service marking the anniversary of the attack by Alabama law officers on civil rights demonstrators. He said recent court decisions and certain state legislation have endangered voting rights in much of the nation.

"Since those (court) decisions, there has been a dramatic increase in legislative measures that make it harder for millions of eligible voters to vote and to elect representatives of their choice," Garland told worshippers at Selma's Tabernacle Baptist Church, the site of one of the first mass meetings of the voting rights movement.

"Those measures include practices and procedures that make voting more difficult; redistricting maps that disadvantage minorities; and changes in voting administration that diminish the authority of locally elected or nonpartisan election administrators," he said. "Such measures threaten the foundation of our system of govern-

The march and Garland's speech were among dozens of events during the Selma Bridge Crossing Jubilee, which began Thursday and culminated Sunday.

The commemoration is a frequent stop for Democratic politicians paying homage to the voting rights movement. Some in the crowd gathered to see Harris speak about the upcoming November election and what appears to be a looming rematch between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump.

Khadidah Stone, 27, part of a crowd gathered at the bridge Sunday in light rain before the march, said she sees the work of today's activists as an extension of those who were attacked in Selma in 1965. Stone works for the voter engagement group Alabama Forward, and was a plaintiff in the Voting Rights case against the state that led to creating a second Alabama congressional district with a substantial number of Black voters. Voters will cast their first ballots in that district on Tuesday.

We have to continue to fight, because they (voting rights) are under attack," Stone said.

Nita Hill wore a hat saying "Good Trouble," a phrase associated with the late Rep. John Lewis,

who was beaten on the bridge during Bloody Sunday. Hill, 70, said it is important for Biden supporters to vote in November.

'I believe Trump is trying to take us back," said Hill, a retired university payroll specialist.

Decades ago, images of the violence that at the bridge stunned Americans, which helped galvanize support for passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The law struck down barriers prohibiting Black people from voting.

U.S. Rep. James Clyburn, a Democrat of South Carolina who is leading a pilgrimage to Selma, said he is seeking to "remind people that we are celebrating an event that started this country on a better road toward a more perfect union," but the right to vote is still not guaranteed.

Clyburn sees Selma as the nexus of the 1960s movement for voting rights, at a time when there currently are efforts to scale back those rights.

"The Voting Rights Act of 1965 became a reality in August of 1965 because of what happened on March 7th of 1965," Clyburn said.

'We are at an inflection point in this country," he added. "And hopefully this year's march will allow people to take stock of where we are.

## Super Tuesday highlights how presidential selection process can exclude many U.S. voters

**By GARY FIELDS Associated Press** 

WASHINGTON (AP) — As an independent, Christian Miller can't vote in Pennsylvania's closed presidential primary in April. He said it wouldn't matter even if he could.

'You're not really voting for anything," said Miller, who left the Democratic Party in 2022. "Every election I've ever seen, the candidates have been decided by the time they get to Pennsylvania.'

Pennsylvania is a crucial presidential swing state and the fifth most populous in the country. And yet holding a primary so much later than other states means its voters often have little say in choosing the presidential contenders. It's the same for voters in much of the rest of the country.

That dynamic is even more pronounced this year with the front-runners for both major parties in overwhelming position to become the presumptive nominees on or not long after Super Tuesday, traditionally the biggest day on the election calendar when 16 states hold contests.

Academics and democracy analysts said the presidential primary system, in which a small percentage of the nation's voters often determines the candidates, is one of several quirks that make the United States stand out. To some, it raises questions about whether the world's oldest and most prominent democracy might also be among the least representative.

Voter attitudes might be different if the U.S. were more like many countries in the European Union that give all voters a slate of candidates from different par-

Soling

ties and then hold a run-off 24 million voters who end with the top vote-getters, said Danielle Piatkiewicz, deputy chief operating officer at the Alliance of Democracies Foundation, a Denmark-based think tank.

'You don't have the frustrations of where it's an either or system," she said. "Usually you can find a political party that meets your needs.

Attention to America's primary system is especially notable this year, a historic one for elections around the world and as polls have consistently shown a deep lack of enthusiasm for a rematch between Democratic President Joe Biden and his predecessor, Republican Donald Trump.

As Tuesday's contests near, Biden and Trump appear on their way to securing their parties' nominations even though just eight states will have awarded delegates through presidential primaries or party caucuses by then.

Paula Stevens, 73, is one of those voters unhappy with the candidate options and frustrated that the contests are likely to be decided by the time she is able to vote on March 19, the date of Ohio's primary.

Grocery shopping north of Columbus, Stevens said she will pass on this year's presidential contest. She registered Republican in 2016 specifically to vote against Trump, but can't support Biden this year.

There's no choice," she said.

Nick Troiano, founding executive director of the group Unite America, said the system also fails to engage independent voters, who are prohibited from voting in presidential primaries in 22 states. That's

up "stuck with the party nominees" without selecting them, he said.

He said gerrymandering of congressional and state legislative districts highlights another consequence of independents being excluded from many party

"The primaries are really the only elections that matter because the districts are so uncompetitive these days," he said.

More than 80% of congressional districts are decided in the primary because the districts lean so heavily in favor of one party or the other. But a much smaller percentage of voters cast ballots in those races: "So we have a rule of the minority, not the majority,"

It's yet another aspect of elections in the U.S. that sets the country apart. In most states, a partisan legislature draws the legislative and congressional districts and can do so in a way that ensures it will hold onto, and perhaps expand, its

power. The U.S. is "pretty close to the only democracy in the world" that has the participants of the government controlling the redistricting process and making the rules, said Michael Miller, a political scientist who specializes in democratization at George Washington University. "For a huge swath of our country, it's still parties picking what's best for the current party in control."

What several experts said they find most striking about the U.S. compared to some other democracies is that the right to vote is not enshrined in the Constitution.

The amendments make

it illegal to deny specific groups the right to vote, "but there is no provision in the Constitution that gives you the right to vote generally, other than the anti-discrimination provisions," said Paul Smith, vice president of the Campaign Legal Center.

What is there is "not the same as saying every citizen has the right to vote and to participate in a free and fair electoral process. If I could wave a wand, I would start there," said Nathan Stock, associate director of the Carter Center's Conflict Resolution Program. "That lack of a codified right allows for a lot of other mechanisms, voter suppression, all kinds of issues that at this point are fairly unique to American democ-

Other concerns include

the hyper partisanship prevalent in the country's politics and the stagnant nature of the government. The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, which ranks 167 countries and territories on measures such as political culture and political participation, lists the U.S. as a flawed democracy in its 2023 report.

The report warned that if Biden faces Trump again in the general election "a country that was once a beacon of democracy is likely to slide deeper into division and disenchantment."

There is one notable bright spot. Despite hurdles to voting and a selection process for presidential candidates that can exclude much of the country, Miller, of George Washington University, said the actual

administration of elections is "exceptional in the United

That is despite years of attacks from Trump, who falsely blames his loss in 2020 on widespread voter fraud and whose drumbeat of election lies has persuaded a majority of Republicans to believe Biden was not elected legitimately.

"Despite the growing distrust of the system because of extreme partisanship, there's really no evidence of any real fraud occurring," he said, noting the dedicated professionals running the

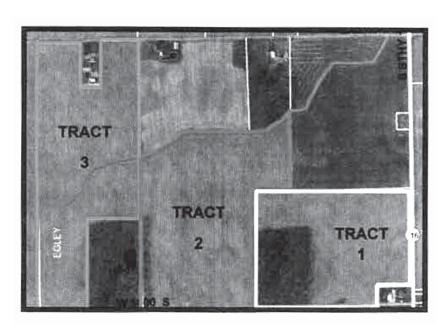
"Even well-established democracies have much higher degrees of errors or even some degrees of violence," he said. "We don't really have that — so far, anyway.'

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