

The News - Banner

www.News-Banner.com

THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2024 BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection \$1.00

County rejects health officer's request for a raise

By HOLLY GASKILL
Health Officer Dr. Kay Johnson approached the Wells County Commissioners and County Council earlier this week asking for increased compensation to accommodate an increasing workload. Both boards met the request with a resounding rejection. The county announced Johnson's voluntary resignation from the position on Feb. 16 through an agreement between her and the Wells County Board of Health; the board had initiated the process for her removal in December. However, due to the nature of the position, Johnson retains the role and responsibilities until a new health officer is appointed. Officials stated the county had several prospects for a new health officer. The Wells County Board of Health is responsible for appointing a new health officer, who will then be certified by the commissioners. In the meantime, Johnson said her work hours have significantly increased as the Health Department prepares its proposal for Health First Indiana and two other grant applications. Considering her current salary — \$783.92 biweekly — Johnson said she was being compensated at roughly \$20 per hour. Citing her previous industry experience, Johnson said the same services could cost anywhere from \$350-500 from a consultant. She did not provide a number for her pro-

posed raise but suggested it could be budgeted as an additional contracted role. However, Council President Seth Whicker stated County Attorney Ted Storer advised Johnson could not be compensated by the county beyond her current role. According to the agreement between the Board of Health and Johnson, Johnson is not able to hold any other role in the county. She will continue to receive the same full compensation for what would have been her term as health officer through April 2026. She will finish her tenure for "consultation at the sole discretion and request of the President of the (Board of Health)" when a new health officer is appointed. "Well, what I would tell you is to put a hold on doing any more work until you first get approval from the Board of Health because you're doing a lot of work," Whicker said. "Stop doing the work," Harnish added. "If you're not being reimbursed for it, I would hit pause." Johnson clarified, "Well, I do the work not for the reimbursement — I do the work because I think this is important for Wells County." "We appreciate that, but I think particularly at this time of transition in the Health Department, moving in a new direction ... I think it would be most appropriate that the Health Department begin to transition

(Continued on Page 2)

Board of Health to appoint new health officer Monday

By HOLLY GASKILL
The Wells County Health Board has announced a special session with the intent to appoint a new health officer. The prospective appointment is scheduled for 7 p.m. Monday, March 11, or directly following a preceding executive session at 6 p.m. Both meetings will take place in the large conference room of the Wells County Public Library. Reasons for the executive session were: to receive information about and interview prospective employees and to discuss records classified as confidential by state or federal statute. Should the board make an appointment on Monday, the Wells County Commissioners with then have to certify the appointment. Their next meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m. Monday, March 18, in the meeting room of the Carnegie Annex. The board initiated the removal of Health Officer Dr. Kay Johnson in December. Following several months of discussion, the county announced on

Feb. 16 that the parties had reached an agreement. With this agreement, Johnson voluntarily resigned from her role but continued to carry out its responsibilities in the interim. Following the appointment of a new health officer, Johnson will transition into a consulting role, which will be used at the "sole discretion and request of the President of the (Board of Health). She will also be compensated at the same rate she would have as the health officer for what would have been the remaining duration of her term through April 30, 2026. This will total over \$40,000 from the potential transition of leadership. Both parties have agreed to take no further action against the other on the terms outlined in the agreement. However, the board retains the power to vote on Johnson's removal should the terms of the agreement be violated. Neither party has admitted wrongdoing.

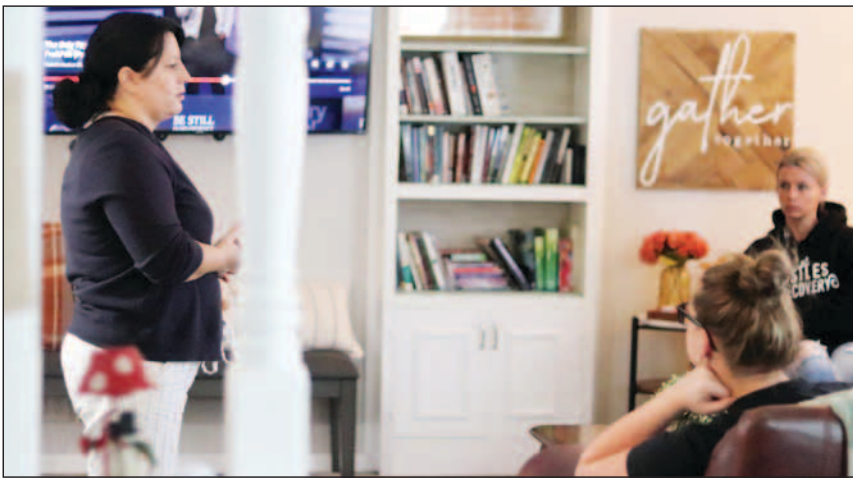
holly@news-banner.com



Above, soon-to-be graduates at Grace & Mercy (pictured) bow their heads in prayer before they gathered together for a meal. (Photos by Sydney Kent)

Grace & Mercy will celebrate graduating class in public event

By SYDNEY KENT
Five women are expected to graduate from Grace & Mercy during a public event later this spring — a first in the organization's history. Program Director Bethanie Burns said the change was prompted by a desire for deeper celebration and community inclusivity. "Graduation is such a celebration for all the hard work women put in," Burns explained. "We want all who are able to attend to support them in this accomplishment. Especially family and the community that has supported them along their journeys." Burns said that women enter into a six-month aftercare program following graduation. "During this time, we meet up and make sure they're still doing well in their personal recovery," Burns continued. "Being out on their own again can be a little scary at times. Staying connected through meetings and events keeps an open-door to communication with us if they need help." Beginning this month, Burns announced that there will also be a group meeting for those in the aftercare



Bethanie Burns (left) stopped in to check on fellow staff and residents at Hannah's House after a woman unexpectedly chose to leave of the program. Burns encouraged all who were present to continue their paths of recovery and follow the program through to graduation from Grace and Mercy.

program. The group will gather on the last Wednesday of the month at The Meeting Place. Burns emphasized gratitude for Steve and Stephanie Roads who have allowed the organization the safe off-site location for women to meet during the program. Specific information about the graduation will be available soon. Anyone who is interested in more information regarding the event should contact Bethanie Burns at bethanie@cnei.org. sydney@news-banner.com

County settles payment issue for jail renovation, talks punchlist items

By HOLLY GASKILL
After months of ongoing conversation about the unfinished work at the Wells County Jail, the County Commissioners came to a compromise with Ameresco, the group in charge of the work, on Monday. The county has agreed to withhold \$40,000 from the final \$134,830 payment, invoiced in December. The withheld amount will act as a retainer for the final large item of the project — regulating HVAC in the administrative portion of the jail. According to Ameresco senior project developer Brad Driver, issues with subcontractors have contributed to the delay in closing the project, which was supposed to wrap over a year ago. However,

he said the HVAC issue can only be resolved during warm summer weather. Driver first approached the commissioners about final payment at their Feb. 5 meeting, but the commissioners were expressly against paying the full amount due to the incomplete work. Having discussed the matter further with Ameresco and County Attorney Ted Storer, the commissioners unanimously approved the \$94,830 payment. Driver also reminded the board that Ameresco would continue to provide support to the jail for their 20-year contract for energy savings. Also Monday, Highway Supervisor Shawn Bonar

(Continued on Page 2)

Southern Wells school board considers new auxiliary gym project

By HOLLY GASKILL
Following expressed interest from the community over the last several months, Southern Wells school board members explored potential options for a new auxiliary gym Tuesday afternoon. Athletic Director Todd Thieme and Superintendent Trent Lehman toured several other area gyms and reviewed the district's financial possibilities. The two determined the school could issue a roughly \$6.1 million bond to complete the project, as well as several needed repairs to the building. According to Lehman, the district would raise its tax rate by nine cents, equaling a \$18.49 increase for every \$100,000 in assessed

property value for homesteads. Lehman advised that the district's tax rate recently decreased due to an overall increase in assessed value within the district. He stated the bond would maintain a relatively consistent rate. Of the total bond, Lehman estimated roughly \$2.5 million was needed for various building needs, including roof repairs. He believed roughly \$3.6 million would remain for the auxiliary gym after fees for issuing a bond. Because of this, Thieme said the school would be somewhat limited in what they could pursue — he estimated the maximum space they could add would not

(Continued on Page 2)

Inside
Local/Area
Indiana news 3
Police Notebook . . . 3

Opinion
Angelkeep 4

Also...
Sports 6
Classifieds 7
Diversions 5

Outside

Mostly cloudy and breezy today, rain tonight

Today	Friday	Saturday
High 51	High 58	High 53
Low 41	Low 48	Low 29

More Weather on Page 2

Online

Follow us on Facebook!
Go to www.facebook.com/newsbanner

Place Your Classified Ads 24/7

Vol. 95 No. 107
THURSDAY
March 7, 2024

Tax Season is Here!

Partnering with
• Individuals
• Businesses
• Agriculture

Call Today!

Bluffton CPA Group

(260) 824-1040 (260) 824-5225
info@blufftoncpagroup.com
2401 N Main Street | Bluffton, IN 46714

How to contact us:
Call us: **824-0224**
or **1-800-579-7476**
email@news-banner.com

On the Web:
www.news-banner.com

Follow us at:
twitter.com/newsbanner

8 04879 07558 5

Health officer's request

(Continued from Page 1)
to the new (health officer)," Harnish said. "It's not fair to you to continue doing work that you're not paid for, and that would be my personal view."

"Nobody with the county should be doing work they're not getting paid for," Whicker concluded.

Coinciding with this

request, Johnson asked for the council's endorsement for the department's application to the Protecting Indiana's Newborns grant. The council stated they couldn't approve the incomplete application, nor could they do so prior to approval from the Board of Health and Commissioners. Neither board is scheduled to meet

before the grant's March 15 deadline.

Johnson insisted she could finish the application and the boards could hold "emergency meetings," but Whicker said there appeared to be too many hurdles to the application at this time. He encouraged Johnson to focus her efforts on the HFI proposal and Disaster

Preparedness grant she discussed.

"I don't see any path forward with this," Harnish said. "We're moving into a new chapter of the Health Department. There's going to be a new health officer. You resigned. You're here temporarily. I'm just not sure that there's a future."

holly@news-banner.com

Jail renovation

(Continued from Page 1)

advised there are a number of items to be resolved with the new highway building. Bonar stated the building had received a violation for its emergency lighting, and they had 30 days to resolve the issue. Additionally, there were multiple outdoor lighting packs not working, office spaces without working heat, and issues with the pressure washer, among other items.

"It's going to be the same as the jail — it's not complete until it's complete," said Commissioner Jeff Stringer.

Even so, Bonar found the transition a net positive experience for the department.

"We're almost to the finish line. We'll keep our heads up," concluded Stringer.

Bonar said they have moved most items into the new building, and the old highway garage property will go to

auction on April 9.

As for the jail, Sheriff Scott Holli-day reported 77 inmates were being housed in the building on Monday, and this number dropped to 76 in a report to the Wells County Council on Tuesday. Of the 76 inmates, 40 were pre-trial holds for the Wells County Circuit Court, 22 pre-trial holds for the Superior Court and nine from the Department of Correction.

holly@news-banner.com

Southern Wells gym

(Continued from Page 1)

exceed 12,000 square feet.

However, Thieme also believed it would be possible to meet most of the previously mentioned desires, including a basketball court, weight room, batting cages, wrestling room and indoor track. It would potentially be located on either the west side entrance to the Raider Dome or the east side where the buses park.

Thieme also said that some local groups had expressed interest in offering a lower price to help support the district.

"It's never going to get cheaper to build," Thieme said.

Thieme emphasized that the additional space would help ease the fight for practice space between teams,

allow the school to host more athletic events and serve the general community.

School board members Todd Fiechter, Chad Roush, Delora Schneider and Andrew Pursifull expressed interest but recognized the proposal was a lot to consider.

Roush admitted he struggled with what was a "want" and a "need" with the matter, also asking if it was more important to build a gym or to build the "right" gym. Thieme acknowledged this, saying he knew it had been a long-time desire expressed by community members. He recognized that of the schools he and Lehman had toured, the only regrets administrators mentioned were not making

their auxiliary gyms larger.

To this extent, Roush added, "I hate to build this for \$3.5 million, and then those same people that are upset we're doing that come and look and (say), 'Why the heck did you build this so small?'"

"I would always wish for something bigger too, but my biggest concern is that we (might) miss out on the opportunity to do something because it's not the 'best' thing," Thieme countered.

The district would have to put the matter up to a public referendum to increase the bond beyond \$6.1 million.

Fiechter, however, found the current price point as an asset. "My gut says we won't have a lot of community pushback at this

level. If this was a \$12-\$15 million project, I think we would."

That said, Fiechter expressed hesitation with the timing, given that his and Roush's terms will end this year. Since the topic was brought to the board in November, Fiechter said several teachers had also approached him saying the school needed more classroom space, not a gym. "We've got to decide if this our decision or the next person's decision," Fiechter said.

The board members resolved to take the matter under advisement and continue the discussion. Their next scheduled meeting is 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 19.

holly@news-banner.com

Senators spar over looser teenage labor laws; plus: pensions, land buys and more

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Senate Democrats maintained fierce opposition on Tuesday to legislation loosening Indiana's child labor laws, while their Republican colleagues took the opportunity to shore up their conservative credentials.

The Senate also approved proposals dealing with education, pensions, land purchases, public access laws and birth control, just in time for a Tuesday deadline. Senators altered all of those bills, so they head back to the House for consent to the changes.

Sen. Brian Buchanan, R-Lebanon, dubbed House Bill 1093, which he sponsored, a "teenage workforce bill" aligning Indiana's more stringent laws with federal requirements.

It would relax a variety of limits on the hours children aged 14-16 can work, including for gigs "dangerous to life or limb." It would also exempt 16- and 17-year-olds working in agriculture from a ban on minors working in "hazardous" jobs.

The legislation also would introduce labor law carveouts for children working as actors, newspaper carriers, evergreen wreath producers, or for companies their parents at least partially own. Another carveout caters to children excused from compulsory school attendance, and largely applies to kids in Amish communities.

Sen. Andrea Hunley, D-Indianapolis, called the changes "irresponsible and dystopian" before chiding lawmakers for not strengthening punishments for problematic employers.

"We shouldn't be solving our workforce problem on the backs of children," she added, suggesting that Indiana instead add to its work-based learning initiatives.

Republicans rebuffed those criticisms, emphasizing the value of work for young Hoosiers.

Sen. Michael Crider, R-Greenfield, said he started working as a newspaper carrier at 10, and has held two jobs at a time for most of his working life since.

"What I learned is: sleep is overrated. You can do what you decide you want to do," Crider said. He said he earned good grades and played sports while working.

Sen. Mike Gaskill, R-Pendleton, said he was "disappointed in the rhetoric" espoused by opponents.

"Work is good. We're not doing this to solve the employer's problem. We're doing this to give kids opportunities," he said.

The legislation passed on a 39-9 vote, along party lines.

Priority measures move

Also in the Senate chamber, lawmakers voted Tuesday to advance House Bill 1001, a Republican priority measure, in a 42-6 vote. The work-based learning proposal builds off a massive 2023 bill that put in motion

statewide career-centered education and training programs.

Multiple House bills prevailed in final votes on Tuesday and now head to Gov. Eric Holcomb, including:

House Bill 1133, which requires disclaimers on political campaign communications that feature fabricated media depicting a candidate that a reasonable person wouldn't know was fake. It passed 95-0.

House Bill 1135, a bill to establish a cosmetology apprenticeship program, succeeded in a 66-27 vote, despite some bipartisan opposition. Twenty-three Democrats and four Republicans voted in opposition.

House Bill 1235, a contentious measure that intends to end an almost 25-year-old case brought by the City of Gary by changing the legal rules on who can bring a firearms regulation case to court retroactively. The bill advanced to the governor 64-27.

The new legislation seeks to expand education scholarship accounts to siblings of those who already qualify. Currently, ESAs are only available for students who require special education services.

As of November, the Indiana Treasurer of State reported that 431 students were participating in the ESA program — up from 143 students in 2023. State expenditures for those students is about \$5 million, in addition to \$500,000 used by the state office to administer the program. A legislative fiscal note predicts the number of ESA students will likely increase over the next few years, but did not provide a cost estimate for additional student participation.

Also included in the bill are changes to applications for career scholarships accounts, which allow students to complete hands-on training like apprenticeships, rather than traditional college degrees. GOP lawmakers said they want to make the application process easier.

House Bill 1001 additionally creates a "Training Grant Program and Fund" to provide career training grants to non-college bound students, but Sen. Jeff Raatz, R-Richmond, noted state dollars would not "potentially" be appropriated until the 2025 budget session.

A debated previous provision to allow high school graduates to use money from the 21st Century Scholars program and Frank O'Bannon grants for work-based training was deleted in the Senate, however.

Republican lawmakers said another priority measure, House Bill 1003, will create a "more efficient" and balanced administrative appeals process by making Indiana's Office of Administrative Law the "ultimate authority" on disputes between agencies and members of the public.

Currently, those rulings are not final and still have to go back to the agency for approval, placing them in limbo. The bill also eliminates judicial defer-

ence to agencies on their interpretations of statutes.

Democrats, however, worried the bill would weaken certain government rulings, such as those from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. It passed 40-7.

A plan for government workers, retired and still serving

A proposal offering Indiana's public retirees a long-term plan to guarantee additional benefits lost support from both Republicans and Democrats — but easily cleared the Senate.

Some lawmakers were disappointed it no longer includes financial help this year.

A Senate committee last week stripped an immediate 13th check for all retirees out of House Bill 1004 and replaced it with a future mechanism offering public employees retired before July 1, 2025 annual 13th checks. Those retired after that date would get 1% cost-of-living adjustments.

Sen. David Niezgodski, D-South Bend, said he liked that the plan addresses the concerns of both long-retired and younger Hoosiers, who typically prefer different benefit bonus types.

"It's the right step forward. But I'm sure that our retirees are going to be holding our feet to the fire because we do have to provide them something," Niezgodski said. "I would hope that maybe there's still another opportunity yet this session; we'll see."

Although some lawmakers wanted both the short- and long-term help, others wanted to focus on paying off pension liabilities first.

"Until we pay off \$10 billion in debt, I can't justify giving anybody anything above what their pension requires — a 13th check, a COLA, any of that," Sen. Aaron Freeman, R-Indianapolis, told reporters Tuesday.

The legislation, originally a House GOP priority bill, passed the Senate in a 42-6 vote.

Republican Sens. Eric Bassler, Dan Demulc, Freeman, Mark Messmer and Mike Young voted in opposition, as did Democrat Sen. Lonnie Randolph.

Limiting certain land buys

Lawmakers unanimously approved legislation protecting farmland and areas near some military or Indiana National Guard facilities from lease or purchase by "foreign adversaries." That includes people and entities affiliated with six countries: China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Russia and Venezuela.

The widespread support from lawmakers came a day after several attempted to edit exceptions into the bill for economic development projects in their communities. Eleven Chinese companies are seeking projects in Indiana, according to Leising, including one kicked out of North Dakota for what state officials characterized as nefarious motivations.

The vote was 48-0.

Weather

Thursday, March 7, 2024

(24-hour observations at 10:07 p.m. Wednesday)
High: 52; Low: 42; Precipitation: Trace of rain
Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 1.62 feet at 8:45 p.m. Wednesday

Wells County forecast

Today: Mostly cloudy, with a high near 51. East wind around 10 mph.

Tonight: A 20% chance of rain after 4 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 41. East wind around 10 mph.

Friday: Rain, mainly after 1 p.m. High near 58. Southeast wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph. Chance of precipitation is 80%. New precipitation amounts between a tenth and quarter of an inch possible.

Friday Night: Rain. Low around 48. South wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph. Chance of precipitation is 90%. New precipitation amounts between a half and three quarters of an inch possible.

Saturday: Rain. High near 53. Breezy. Chance of precipitation is 80%. New precipitation amounts between three quarters and one inch possible.

Saturday Night: A 30% chance of rain before 1 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 29. Blustery.

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 42. Breezy.

Sunday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 28.

Monday: Sunny, with a high near 53.

Monday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 37.

Tuesday: Sunny, with a high near 61.

Tuesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 44.

Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 64.

House passes \$460B spending bills package

By KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House passed a \$460 billion package of spending bills Wednesday that would keep money flowing to key federal agencies through the remainder of the budget year. The Senate is expected to take up the legislation before a midnight Friday shutdown deadline.

Lawmakers are negotiating a second package of six bills, including defense, in an effort to have all federal agencies fully funded before a March 22 deadline. In the end, total discretionary spending set by Congress is expected to come in at about \$1.66 trillion for the full entire year.

A significant number of House Republicans have lined up in opposition to the spending packages, forcing House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., to use an expedited process to bring the bill up for a vote. That process requires two-thirds of the House to vote for the measure for it to pass.

The House passed the measure by a vote of 339-85.

The nondefense spending in this year's bills is relatively flat compared to the previous year. Supporters say that keeping that spending below the rate of inflation is tantamount to a cut, forcing agencies to be more frugal and focus manpower on top priorities. Johnson cited a 10% cut to the Environmental Protection Agency, a 7% cut to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and a 6% cut to the FBI.

But many Republican lawmakers were seeking much steeper cuts and more policy victories. The House Freedom Caucus, which contains dozens of the GOP's most conservative members, urged Republicans to vote against the first spending package and oppose the second one being negotiated.

"Despite giving Democrats higher spending levels, the omnibus text released so far punts on nearly every single Republican policy priority," the group said.

Johnson countered that House Republicans have just a two-vote majority in the House while Democrats control the Senate and White House.

"We have to be realistic about what we're able to achieve," Johnson said.

Democrats staved off most of the policy riders that House Republicans sought to include in the package. For example, they beat back an effort to block new rules that expand access to the abortion pill mifepristone.

Democrats also said the bill would fully fund a nutrition program for low-income women, infants and children, providing about \$7 billion for what is known as the WIC program. That's a \$1 billion increase from the previous year.

As part of those negotiations, House Republicans pushed to give a few states the ability to disallow the purchase of non-nutritious food, such as sugary drinks and snacks, in the food stamp program known as SNAP. The GOP's effort was unsuccessful for now, but supporters say they'll try again in next year's spending bills.

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 policy mandate prohibits the Justice Department from investigating parents who exercise free speech at local school board meetings.

Another provision strengthens gun rights for certain veterans.

Under current law, the Department of Veterans Affairs 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 because they lack the mental capacity to manage their own affairs. This year's spending package prohibits the department from transmitting that information unless a relevant judicial authority rules that the beneficiary is a danger to himself or herself, or others.



NATIONAL OIL & GAS, INC.

2829 E. State Rd. 124 • Bluffton, Indiana 46714
260-824-2220

Prompt Delivery To Your Home, Farms & Businesses

Competitive Prices on All

Premium Diesel	Racing Gasoline	Mineral Spirits
Non-Ethanol REC-90	Pure 1-K Kerosene	DEF
Packaged and Bulk Motor Oils and Lubes		

For All Your Petroleum Needs Call Us!

Bluffton - Main Office 824-2220

Bluffton - Jay Bertsch 241-0595
Bluffton - Brady Ripple 437-6292
Berne - Mark Lehmann 525-8186
Decatur - Ryan Stucky 273-0317
Huntington - Mathew Harvey 273-1231
Monroeville - Casey Scherer 433-0870
Montpelier - Butch Atkinson 765-348-6059

www.natloil.com

IU Health CEO asks peers to donate to Chambers to head off industry harm

By WHITNEY DOWNARD
Indiana Capital Chronicle

An industry leader at one of Indiana's largest health systems urged fellow hospital stakeholders to donate to gubernatorial candidate Brad Chambers over competitors, saying he is "deeply concerned about the next four years if one of the other candidates is our next republican candidate for governor."

The email also included directions on how to wire money to a "policy" nonprofit that doesn't disclose donors and has no contribution limits.

A full version of the letter, with Murphy's personal cell redacted, is included at the bottom of the story.

Dennis Murphy, the CEO and president of IU Health, emailed two dozen of his peers Sunday detailing a "shared concern" about actions from General Assembly leadership concerning hospitals, perceived mischaracterizations and a fear that the "upcoming gubernatorial (election) has the potential to make these set of issues even worse."

"One candidate has been willing to meet with hospital and health system leaders and truly talk openly about the issues facing our state and our industry, Brad Chambers," Murphy wrote in a letter obtained by the Indiana Capital Chronicle from two sources.

Specifically, Murphy points to U.S. Sen. Mike Braun and Fort Wayne businessman Eric Doden's proposals as potentially harmful to the industry.

The letter asks each "large system" to contribute \$2,000 from each of their top 25 leaders for a total of \$50,000. Freestanding systems were directed to raise \$2,000 from their top five leaders, or \$10,000 — though Murphy said he "hope(d) that some organizations will do significantly more."

IU Health said the letter was a personal effort and that Murphy didn't want to expound further, a sentiment Murphy repeated in a message from his personal email.

Letter contents

Murphy opens the missive about a "shared concern that our legislative leaders do not believe that we as hospital and health systems play a vital role in the health and well-being of our communities."

"Rather, our legislative leaders see us only as a cost to be managed, entities who do not fulfill their not-for-profit status, or the sole reason for the poor health outcomes that exist in our state."

The references appear to be referring to a rash of legislation from the General Assembly attempting to tackle high health care costs spurred by a 2022 letter from House Speaker Todd Huston and Senate Pro Tem Rodric Bray to health insurers and health care systems.

Leaders warned the health entities to lower their prices or risk lawmaker intervention.

In 2023, lawmakers passed a bill that would require the Department of Insurance to compare prices at several non-profit hospital systems with 285% of Medicare — which authors admitted was targeted at certain entities. Initially, the bill would have penalized those systems.

Murphy combated those moves by highlighting "the true good that occurs in each and every one of your organizations every day" in his letter but shared a concern that two candidates "have gone on the record to put forward ideas that would be very harmful to our industry and to our individual institutions."

He didn't specify what about the proposals from Doden and Braun he disliked but called Chambers "balanced" in his approach. Chambers' campaign needed an infusion of cash to counter monies from Hoosiers for Affordable Healthcare, which Murphy said had "raised significant funds on behalf of candidates who will continue to push forward harmful legislation to hospitals and health systems."

A campaign finance search for Al Hubbard, the chair of Hoosiers for Affordable Healthcare, found \$10,000 contributions each to Braun and Chambers. The entity itself hasn't donated to the gubernatorial race.

Donation instructions

Murphy directed leaders to make their donations via Win Red, a Republican fundraising platform. The majority of hospital CEOs emailed didn't have a history of political donations on the Secretary of State's campaign finance portal, including Murphy himself. Some had a smattering of contributions to Friends of Indiana Hospitals, the political action committee for the Indiana Hospital Association.

Messages to three, smaller hospital entities didn't receive a response on Tuesday.

In a statement, IHA said the fund made contributions to various candidates — which includes dozens of Republican and Democratic Statehouse incumbents — but hadn't yet donated to any of the declared gubernatorial candidates in this election cycle.

Two CEOs had contributions to Suburban Health Organization Political Action

Committee, LLC and one donated to HEALTHPAC — the latter of which has contributed a combined \$3,500 to Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch since November 2022.

Crouch, a Republican, launched her gubernatorial campaign in December of 2022.

However, Murphy also included instructions for donating via the Indiana Innovation Council, which is a 501(c)(4) company that isn't required to disclose contributions. The new organization has just a bare bones website.

Such entities include the National Rifle Association and Sierra Club, which aren't supposed to be exclusively dedicated to politics but rather "social welfare" — as detailed by Open Secrets, a campaign finance transparency organization. Open Secrets notes that 501(c)(4) groups aren't required to report all of their spending or identify their donors, which is one of the forms of "dark money" fundraising in politics that obscures funding sources.

Notably, such organizations also don't have maximum caps in their donations to political campaigns.

Murphy's email said the Indiana Innovation Council is "is promoting Brad's economic agenda."

The address affiliated with the entity is the same as the consultant firm for Chambers' senior strategist, Marty Obst.

The state of the race

Neither Crouch nor former Attorney General Curtis Hill have a dedicated section on their websites for health policies. Jamie Reitenour dedicates a portion of her platform to health "freedom" but not prices.

Braun's website says "the high cost of healthcare in Indiana is a glaring weakness," calling for transparency and more against "the powerful healthcare lobby." Many of the one-term senator's efforts have been focused on health care policy, including a wide-ranging national price transparency initiative.

Gubernatorial candidates Eric Doden and U.S. Senator Mike Braun were singled out in an IU CEO letter for health care policies that didn't align with hospitals.

"IU Health CEO Dennis Murphy is donating to my opponents and asking his friends in Big Healthcare to join him because he knows nobody will work harder to lower their prices than I will. Hoosiers are tired of paying some of the highest prices in the country and the CEO of the state's largest hospital system has made it clear he's for the status quo. I am not," Braun said in a statement.

"Indiana will lower healthcare prices through transparency, competition, and empowering healthcare consumers, not the hospital lobby. As Governor, I will work with anyone willing to help Hoosiers see lower prices for their healthcare," he concluded.

Doden's campaign appeared to agree with the criticism from Murphy, drawing from its website section on hospital transparency for reference.

"Dennis Murphy made \$4 million last year as the head of a hospital that makes billions of dollars off Hoosiers but pays no state taxes. He's right, Hoosiers looking to maintain special tax status for hospitals and the status quo in health care should vote for one of the career politicians running," his campaign said in a statement. "As Governor, Eric Doden will implement a plan to ensure hospitals provide full transparency in pricing and their use of taxpayer funding, and incentivize non-profit hospitals to invest a portion of their billions in profits — which are currently on Wall Street — back into the Main Streets of the communities they serve."

Lastly, while Brad Chambers has released a handful of detailed plans on specific areas — including education, China and online safety — none yet address his health policy initiatives.

In a response to the Indiana Capital Chronicle, Chambers said, "We must work together to improve health outcomes for Hoosiers at prices they can afford. Increased competition and price transparency are an important part of the equation, but there is more we can do. As governor, I'll bring all stakeholders to the table to take a holistic approach with the goal of increasing access to high quality care at affordable prices, with an overall focus on improving the average health of Hoosiers."

Last month Chambers loaned another \$2 million to his campaign on top of the \$5 million he loaned last year.

Murphy concludes his letter by urging his peers to make their donations soon, within the next week or so, "if we collectively want to have an impact on this race."

"I am asking you to help your organization and our industry by ensuring we have a true voice at the table in this next administration," he said.

The Republican primary is May 7 and Republicans will convene in a June convention to select their nominee for lieutenant governor.

Bluffton Regional Medical Center hosts annual peanut butter drive

Bluffton Regional Medical Center invites community members to join staff efforts to fight hunger by participating in the second annual Jars of Love Peanut Butter Drive benefiting the Wells County Food Bank. Peanut butter is a sought after item for food banks because of its high nutritional value and long shelf life. Yet, it is one of the least donated items. The Jars of Love Peanut Butter Drive runs now through Monday, March 25.

"We recognize the impact hunger has on an individual's health and wellbeing,

and we want to help those in our community who are struggling with food insecurity," said Julie Thompson, CAO at Bluffton Regional Medical Center. "An estimated 95,000 people are facing food insecurity in Northeast Indiana. The Jars of Love Peanut Butter Drive is a great way to partner with community members to reduce hunger in our area."

Collection bins will be located in the hospital main entrance for community members to drop off peanut butter through March 25.

Police Notebook

INCIDENTS

City:

Monday, 3:48 p.m., All American. Report of a broken lock on wood container, unsure if wood was stolen.

Tuesday, 6:28 a.m., S.R. 1 and East 300 North. Welfare check requested for subject walking in dark clothing. Subject was not impeding traffic or in danger.

Tuesday, 4:08 p.m., North 450 East and East 100 North. Driver cited for speeding 67 in a 45 mph zone.

Tuesday, 4:50 p.m., North Main Street and Willowbrook Trail. Report of theft of driveway markers from Interurban Trail.

Tuesday, 5:56 p.m., Walmart. Report of theft.

Tuesday, 8:47 p.m., McDonalds. Report of assault in parking lot.

Wednesday, 11:19 a.m., Superior Auto. Driver cited for no proof of insurance and no valid license. Vehicle towed.

County:

Tuesday, 3:57 p.m., Wells County Jail. Warrant served to Leigha Harmon at the Wells County Jail.

Tuesday, 8:07 p.m., 5200 West S.R. 218, Poneto.

Caller reported a man on her property asking to leave his vehicle that had broken down. Officer requested to verify information. Driver allowed to leave vehicle on caller's property pending help.

Wednesday, 2:49 a.m., Mike Anderson Chevrolet. Report of people walking around in lot. Officer noted the subject pulled over to talk about some boy problems.

Wednesday, 10:35 a.m., Wells County Jail. Warrant served to Trista Lamprecht.

Ossian:

Tuesday, 4:50 p.m., 2300 East 700 North, Ossian. Caller reported theft of gun from safe.

ACCIDENTS

County:

Tuesday, 3:05 p.m., 300 West and 900 South. Justin Shaneyfelt was driving South on 300 West when his Chevy Malibu collided with a Buick Riviera driven by Dereck Rockwell. Rockwell was stopped at an intersection and started into traffic when he collided with the Malibu. No injuries were reported. Damages did not exceed \$10,000.

ARRESTS

Trista Ann Lamprecht, 31, Markle; battery against public safety official, a Level 5 felony, battery — bodily waste and resisting law enforcement, both Level 6 felonies, intimidation, a Class A misdemeanor, public intoxication and disorderly conduct, both Class B misdemeanors, and public indecency — nudity, a Class C misdemeanor. No bond set.

Joshua Isaac Lutz, 19, Fort Wayne; domestic battery, a Class A misdemeanor. No bond set.

Leilah Da Nae Harmon, 24, Marion; operating a vehicle with an ACE of .15 or more and operating a vehicle while intoxicated — endangerment, both Class A misdemeanors, and leaving the scene of a crash — property damage, a Class B misdemeanor. No bond set.

Suprina Lynn Wayne, 51, Bluffton; possession of methamphetamine, a Level 5 felony, and possession of paraphernalia, a Class C misdemeanor.

Jason Paul Vasquez, 49, Homeless; driving while suspended — prior suspension, a Class A misdemeanor.

Indiana lawmakers in standoff on antisemitism bill following changes sought by critics of Israel

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Disagreements among Indiana lawmakers could stop passage of a bill aiming to address antisemitism on college campuses for the second year in a row, leaving Indiana students and professors uneasy as divisions surrounding the ongoing Israel-Hamas war deepen.

Indiana House Republicans passed House Bill 1002 two months ago as one of their five priorities for the 2024 session. The legislation — largely aimed at higher education — broadly defines antisemitism as religious discrimination and promises to "provide educational opportunities free of religious discrimination."

The House bill used the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

(IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, and explicitly included "contemporary examples of antisemitism" provided by the alliance, which make references to Israel. These have been adopted by the U.S. Department of State.

State senators debating the bill this week, however, passed an amended version of the bill Tuesday in a 42-6 vote that removed language opposed by critics of Israel's military campaign in Gaza. The amended version still includes the IHRA's broad definition of antisemitism but deleted the alliance's name and examples that include explicit references to Israel.

Opponents argued that using direct references would stifle criticism of Israel in academic settings

and advocacy on campuses for Palestinians in a worsening humanitarian crisis.

Betty R. Powell

Calling: 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Friday, March 8.

Funeral: 2:30 p.m. Friday, March 8 at the funeral home.

Goodwin-Cole & Harnish
MEMORIAL CHAPEL
A Tradition of Caring
Locally Owned and Operated Since 1922
St. Rd. 124 East, Bluffton
824-3852

VISITATION & SERVICES

Neva Lee Ann Petty

Calling: 4 - 8 p.m. Friday, March 8 at the funeral home.

Thoma/Rich, Lemler
Funeral Home
308 W. Washington St.
824-3850
www.thomarich.com

Saint Joseph Catholic Church Fish Fry

The Knights of Columbus Council 7555 will host their annual Fish Fry on Friday, March 15 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Saint Joseph Catholic Church, 1300 N. Main St. in Bluffton.

The menu for the drive-through event includes Dan's Fish Fry fish, cheesy potatoes, green beans, and dessert. Prices for the dinner are \$13 for adults and \$6 for children 12 and under.

Proceeds will benefit the children of Wells County.

FORT WAYNE Box Drop

Mattress & Furniture
260-227-2145

No Credit Needed Financing Take it Home Today!

Family Owned & Operated

Amy & Tracy Houtz
260-227-2145
7824 Bluffton Rd.
Fort Wayne, IN

**Best Selection
Incredible Savings**

By Appointment:
Tues - Wed - Thurs
Showroom Open:
Fri & Sat 11am - 4pm

Follow us on Twitter at...twitter.com/newsbanner

Arnold Lumber Co.

425 S. Winchester St., Decatur, IN

Hours: Mon-Thurs 7AM-5PM
Fri 7AM-4:30PM • Sat 7AM-11:30AM
260-724-3108 • Fax 260-724-4505

FABRAL
METAL WALL AND ROOF SYSTEMS

1-800-903-4206 | Check Us Out on Facebook

Prime Rib Dinner

Every Friday after 4pm
Includes Green Beans & Baby Potatoes with Bread

Locally Owned
Restaurant in
Wells County!
260-824-4950

1415 South Main Street, Bluffton, IN 46714

Retention isn't ideal, but it's a tool for our reading problem

The Legislature is poised to pass a bill that would require K-12 school districts to hold back more students who fail the state's elementary school reading exam.

The move is controversial, and we understand that. But as we said in an editorial in December, the state must take action to ensure the next generation of students can read.

Hoosier Opinions

State data shows that nearly 1 in 5 third-graders doesn't pass the state's reading exam. In 2023, that meant 13,840 third-graders didn't meet the state's reading standards. And Chalkbeat Indiana has reported that 96% of those students moved on to fourth grade, anyway.

It's hard to imagine how the current system helps anyone. Those students continue to fall further behind as schoolwork requires that they can read. Teachers in upper grades must try to accommodate those students in ways that distract the teachers from moving other students forward in their learning. And eventually, unprepared students graduate (or worse yet, drop out of school) and enter the workforce.

Under the legislation, schools will be required to first administer the reading test to students in the second grade. That's a year earlier than required now. Students that fail must be offered extra help. If a student fails three times by the end of third grade, the school must hold the student back.

There are some limited exceptions (including for English-language learners and special education students), but the goal is that the majority of kids who can't read repeat third grade.

Some Democrats and educators oppose the bill. Many worry about stigmatizing kids who have to repeat third grade. Other critics say lawmakers should wait to see whether a change in reading curriculum approved last year will work.

And many fear the change will create a glut of students in third grade that schools aren't prepared to deal with. The nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency estimates that as many as 7,050 students could be held back in 2026, when the law is fully implemented. That could cost the state an additional \$57 million as those students work through the system and cause space problems and third-grade teacher shortages.

That would be worse in some districts. In Indianapolis Public Schools, for example, about 1 in 4 students is sent to fourth grade without passing the iRead exam, according to Chalkbeat Indiana.

We empathize with all of those concerns. But we think the problem is too great not to try to attack it in multiple ways. Retention is one approach. The curriculum changes are another. And lawmakers need to consider more ideas.

Among them: Requiring students to attend school by age 5 and fully funding pre-kindergarten programs. Republicans have been reluctant to embrace either idea. But we think it's time to reconsider both. This problem is too important not to consider all the options.

INDIANAPOLIS BUSINESS JOURNAL.



The state of the disunion

If advance reports are correct, President Biden's State of the Union address will sound more like a political stump speech than an honest assessment of where the country stands. The man who promised to be a uniter, will likely deliver one of the most divisive speeches of his presidency.

The White House released a few tidbits from the speech, including a line I haven't heard in decades. "Whose side are you on?" the president will reportedly say. That line recalls the "Red scare" of the '50s, which gave rise to the McCarthy era and his view that communists had infiltrated the government and were behind virtually every tree. It was a scare tactic then and it is one now, except then it was invoked by right-wingers. Now it is being used by a liberal president.

The line reeks of desperation. With his polls headed south that include, according to Gallup, a decline in the Democratic Party's advantage over Republicans in party preferences for Black and Hispanic adults by nearly 20 percent, the president is trying to resurrect political ghosts from the past, hoping voters will be haunted by them today. It will likely reinforce the view, especially among young voters, that Biden doesn't speak for their generation.

Something else from the advance speech clips. White House Communications Director Ben LaBolt says the president "will make the case to continue to build the economy from the bottom up and middle out." Democrats have been saying that for decades. If they have not succeeded, which is the implication of that line, wouldn't it be on them?

LaBolt then defaults to a familiar Democratic position, claiming Republicans want to reward "billionaires and corporations with tax breaks, taking away



Cal Thomas

rights (meaning abortion, which has not been taken away) and "undermining our democracy," which to Democrats is only "undermined" when Republicans are elected.

President Biden will go on (and on), according to LaBolt, about the need to lower health care costs, attacking drug company profits, tax breaks for the wealthy (the government takes in record amounts of revenue. It's the spending, stupid) and Trump cozying up to Vladimir Putin.

Most of this is familiar boilerplate Democrat rhetoric. I thought Obamacare was going to take care of lowering the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs? The business about evil corporations and the rich goes back to the days of Franklin Roosevelt. Maybe Biden thinks no one will notice?

Republicans should avoid the temptation to shout out during the president's address, as some have done before. That will only divert attention from him and onto them. They will have their chance when their designated responder, Sen. Katie Britt (R-Ala.), follows the president.

Ratings for these speeches have not been good in recent years. Maybe they will improve Thursday night, if only because a lot of people will want to know if the president can get through the address without slurring his words and forgetting his place in the teleprompter. It may be his last chance to reverse what many voters believe - that he is not up to a second term.

Might I make a request? Would members of Congress please remain seated during the speech instead of popping up and down? It is distracting and annoying. Probably won't happen, though. Maybe mandatory seat belts would work.

tcaditors@tribpub.com.

Letters to the Editor

Think before you call

Last weekend while visiting a friend in Bluffton, she was reading the N-B and chuckling — not at the cartoon strip but at the police notes.

Someone thought it was suspicious that a man with a mustache was exercising by the mail box in front of the sheriff's office. She showed me one she had saved from a few weeks ago where a caller thought her neighbor's dog was too fat. Is this

a police matter? Maybe he/she could offer to walk the dog for the neighbor?

My friend says the police notes are sometimes funnier than the cartoons. I think people just need to think a minute before they grab their phone. If it's important, please do call, but your police department surely has more important things to do.

GLORIA BURKHOLDER
Huntertown

Today in History

By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, March 7, the 67th day of 2024. There are 299 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history: On March 7, 1965, a march by civil rights demonstrators was violently broken up at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, by state troopers and a sheriff's posse in what became known as "Bloody Sunday."

On this date: In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell received a U.S. patent for his telephone.

In 1911, President William Howard Taft ordered 20,000 troops to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border in response to the Mexican Revolution.

In 1916, Bavarian Motor

Works (BMW) had its beginnings in Munich, Germany, as an airplane engine manufacturer.

In 1926, the first successful trans-Atlantic radio-telephone conversations took place between New York and London.

In 1936, Adolf Hitler ordered his troops to march into the Rhineland, thereby breaking the Treaty of Versailles and the Locarno Pact.

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. forces crossed the Rhine at Remagen, Germany, using the damaged but still usable Ludendorff Bridge.

In 1975, the U.S. Senate revised its filibuster rule, allowing 60 senators to limit debate in most cases, instead of the previously required two-thirds of senators present.

Change spelled backward is "egnahc"

"They change the night into day: the light is short because of darkness." Job wrote it at 17:12 because he knew the truth. You can't change darkness into light with a sundial. Nor by Gen Z digital.

Yet we obeyed the fall backward rule. Now we must obey the spring ahead counterpart, drink the grape Kool-Aid. It attempts the un-gospel, to change night into day.

Don't forget to change your clocks on Sunday, the day the elected chosen determined was enough of darkness. Will it produce a second more daylight? No, not any more than reversing the spelling of change which simply turns it into "egnahc." Angelkeep has had about all the egnahc it can take for one year.

If computers' and cell phones' programs automatically change Standard Time to DST, why can't it be done on alarm clocks, ranges, microwaves, coffee pots, watches, water softeners, etc.?

Angelkeep outdoor change is spring-time constant, but natural. Remember natural spelled backward is "larutan." Spring that ahead to a legislator.

Did you know Bluffton, Ind., (the abbreviation of Indiana before the legislature changed it) voted May 29, 1940, to remain on Standard Time. God's time, some would have said. There were 739 who said it, compared to 543 who voted to change darkness into light. But what did the exit polls say? Any bogus mail ballots? Did Bluffton ever vote a DST return? Is Sunday's time change actually legal in Bluffton?

Angelkeep Journals

By the way, wasn't light and dark already done by a supreme being? "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night..." Genesis 1:16 KJV. Crocus changes from a tiny hard bulb to a much larger, colorful, delicate bloom. If Congress attempts to change that, Angelkeep will rise up and vote nay. Nay spelled backward is "yan."

Dragonflies will soon change from nymph stage living in Angel-pond into the glorious aerodynamic insect long ago denoted as mascot of Angelkeep. They zip and fly over the pond — brilliantly unencumbered by legislation. They mate. In tandem they oviposit eggs back into the pond perpetuating the annual cycle of life. Nobody but "ydobon" (spelled backward) can change the God creation and cause a dragonfly to emote into a nymph. If Congress tries to reverse that naturalness, as sure as day to night, three Angelkeep votes will reject the change, or "egnahc."

E. B. Williamson, Bluffton's great world-renown dragonfly expert, will rise up and join Angelkeep in voting to keep dragonfly time "the same, yesterday, today, and forever. Hebrews 13:8."

The end of the maple syrup season coincides with Daylight Savings



Alan Daugherty

Time. It's natural (backward being "larutan.") If man tried to change the time for the sap to rise in the trees, perhaps arguing that a New York City waffle syrup market would increase, would a legislative act do good or harm? "Doog and Mrah" (spelling reversals) say ye Angelkeep.

If the sap direction changed in honor of "Daylight Sap Direction Time," then the buds would not come to life. If buds failed to leaf, no chlorophyll would be produced. If chlorophyll failed to appear, there would be no photosynthesis. Without photosynthesis, oxygen would be depleted. Sap sprouts the multitude colors of green. Green is the primary sign of spring. Without spring greens, life would be utterly unbearable. "Elbaraebnu!"

Ecclesiastes 3: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance, a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away..."

Stop! "Pots!" Stop! Did Ecclesiastes prophesy Daylight Savings Time? Let the emerald glow of the trees guide you. Leaves and spring are emerging. Exit the house and enjoy real time.

Don't forget to set your appliances ahead one hour on Sunday. It's the unnatural law.

Mr. Daugherty is a Wells County resident who, along with his wife Gwen, enjoy their backyard and have named it "Angelkeep."

The News-Banner

(USPS 059-200)

Evening News est. 1892 • Evening Banner est. 1899 • Consolidated 1929

News-Banner Publications, Inc.

George B. Witwer, Chairman of the Board
Doug Brown, President, Publisher
Dianne Witwer, Secretary/Treasurer

Periodicals Postage Paid at Bluffton, IN 46714. Published every day except Sundays and principal holidays at 125 N. Johnson St., Bluffton IN 46714, Post Office Box 436

Holly Gaskill, Editor

Mark Miller, Opinion Page Editor

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

The News-Banner

(USPS 059-200)

Periodicals Postage Paid at Bluffton, IN 46714. Published every day except Sundays and principal holidays at 125 N. Johnson St., Bluffton IN 46714, Post Office Box 436

Evening News est. 1892 • Evening Banner est. 1899 • Consolidated 1929

News-Banner Publications, Inc.

George B. Witwer, Chairman of the Board
Doug Brown, President, Publisher
Dianne Witwer, Secretary/Treasurer
Holly Gaskill, Editor
Mark Miller, Opinion Page Editor

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

FIA confirms whistleblower complaints against president of Saudi Arabia and Vegas races

By JENNA FRYER
AP Auto Racing Writer

The FIA said Tuesday that its compliance officer has received two complaints "detailing potential allegations involving certain members of its governing body" in seeming reference to whistleblower claims against the president of Formula 1's governing body.

The BBC reported this week that FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem allegedly intervened to overturn a penalty given to Fernando Alonso at last year's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. A second BBC report says the same whistleblower also claims Ben Sulayem told officials not to certify the Las Vegas circuit for its high-profile race last November.

"The Compliance Department is assessing these concerns, as is common practice in these matters, to ensure that due process is meticulously followed," the FIA said.

The FIA confirmed no details about the allegations or even that Ben Sulayem is the target. In an additional statement given to The Associated Press, an FIA spokesman said: "It is unfortunate and a source of great concern that the matter has been disclosed to the media without any prior authorization and that certain elements of the report were inaccurately reported."

The BBC reports follow a dramatic month in which Red Bull investigated team principal Christian Horner over allegations of misconduct involving a team employee. The complaint was dismissed days before Saturday's season-opening race in Bahrain, won by Max Verstappen of Red Bull.

Even after Horner was cleared by Red Bull's parent company, a trove of alleged evidence against him was leaked to more than 100 industry members during practice in Bahrain. Horner has denied all allegations and his wife, Geri Halliwell, was by his side on race day for Red Bull's 1-2 finish.

After the race, Verstappen's father told The Daily Mail the team will implore if Horner is not removed from his position.

Now attention has shifted from the Horner saga to allegations against Ben Sulayem, who has been heavily scrutinized through his first two seasons as FIA president.

The whistleblower is believed to be a former FIA employee who now works for Formula One Management, a person with direct knowledge of the complaints told AP speaking on condition of anonymity because the name and other details are not being disclosed by FIA.

The allegations against Ben Sulayem are part of what appears to be a bitter power struggle between the governing body and F1 itself. Ben Sulayem was elected FIA president by its membership in 2021 just days after the controversial season finale cost Lewis Hamilton a record-breaking eighth title and gave Verstappen his first world championship.

Ben Sulayem has been a target since his election. He has been accused by F1 rights holder Liberty Media of harmfully downplaying F1's commercial value; he publicly backed Michael Andretti and General Motors' bid to expand the 10-team grid despite the refusal of F1 to allow the Americans entry, and he apparently blocked an agreement between the teams and Liberty

to double the number of sprint weekends for 2023.

Most recently, Ben Sulayem infuriated Mercedes boss Toto Wolff and his wife, Susie, who runs the all-female F1 Academy, for questioning if there is a conflict of interest with their respective jobs. The FIA launched a compliance inquiry into the Wolffs that was dropped two days later.

The Wolffs may pursue legal action and angrily defended their integrity. The other nine F1 teams in identically worded statements released simultaneously all denied filing a complaint about the Wolffs.

The FIA maintains it must have a complaint before it can investigate any improprieties and has never clarified what triggered the investigation into the Wolffs. At the same time, a lack of formal complaint filed to FIA against Horner has been cited as the reason why the FIA has not launched its own investigation.

In the latest allegations, the whistleblower reportedly told the BBC that Ben Sulayem called Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa - the FIA's vice president for sport for the Middle East and North Africa region — to make clear he thought a 10-second penalty against Alonso last season should be rescinded for work done on his car while he was serving a previous five-second penalty.

The penalty dropped Alonso from third place to fourth. The penalty was overturned and Alonso nudged George Russell of Mercedes off the podium.

Last fall, Ben Sulayem reportedly told race stewards to find a way not to declare the Las Vegas circuit safe for racing.

The temporary street course was not completed in time to be inspected in the FIA's required window ahead of an event. The inspection happened early in the morning of the first practice and Carlos Sainz Jr. ran over a loose drain cover that destroyed his Ferrari and ended the session after just nine minutes.

The entire course had to be reinspected, leading to lengthy delays and a second practice that ended at 4 a.m. with no spectators in attendance. Ferrari said last month it has yet to come to a financial resolution with F1 over the cost of repairs to Sainz's car.

The BBC said the whistleblower was contacted by their manager, "who on behalf of the FIA president instructed him to find some concerns to prevent the FIA from certifying the circuit before the weekend of the race". The BBC said the compliance report quotes the whistleblower as saying that "the purpose was to find fault with the track in order to withhold the license."

The Las Vegas Grand Prix debut race was the first promoted by F1 and Liberty Media, and an estimated \$500 million was spent on the event. It has not been revealed why Ben Sulayem would have wanted to sink the marquee event, which overcame all its hiccups to produce one of the best races of the 2023 season.

There had been two years of tension, the BBC reported, between Liberty Media and the FIA over the costs of Las Vegas with Ben Sulayem allegedly wanting more money from F1 for the sanctioning body to oversee the event.

F1 races in Saudi Arabia this weekend.

High School Calendar

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

No events scheduled.

THURSDAY, MARCH 7

No events scheduled.

FRIDAY, MARCH 8

No events scheduled.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

TRACK & FIELD (CO-ED): Norwell at Bulldog Invite at Indiana Tech (Warrior Park), 10 a.m.

MONDAY, MARCH 11

No events scheduled.

TUESDAY, MARCH 12

No events scheduled.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13

No events scheduled.

THURSDAY, MARCH 14

No events scheduled.

FRIDAY, MARCH 15

TRACK & FIELD (CO-ED): Bluffton, Norwell at Taylor University Qualifier, 5:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

No events scheduled.

Ellis has 25, Purdue rallies past Northwestern in Big Ten women's tournament

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)

— Abbey Ellis scored 25 points, 10 in the fourth quarter when she made six free throws in the last 40 seconds, and 12th-seeded Purdue rallied to beat 13th-seeded Northwestern 78-72 in the first round of the Big Ten Tournament on Wednesday night.

Freshman reserve Rashunda Jones had 17 of her 19 points in the second half, nine in the fourth quarter, including a pair of three-point plays. She opened the fourth with a fast break layup, with the ensuing free throw tying the game. It also kicked off an 11-1 run. Her second and-1, followed by Jeanae Terry's free throw, made it 71-61 with 1:30 to play.

That was cushion enough to send the Boilermakers (13-17) into a second-round matchup with fifth-seeded Nebraska on Thursday.

Madison Layden scored 11 points for Purdue. Terry had 16 rebounds and Ellis 10, which helped the Boilermakers take control of the boards in the second half. They finished with 20 on the offensive end.



A turnover and foul, which led to two free throws, helped Northwestern get within 74-70. Ellis, who had 18 points in the second half, was clutch at the line, leading Purdue's 15 of 18 from the line in

the fourth quarter.

Caleigh Walsh had 26 points and eight rebounds for the Wildcats (9-21). Melanie Daley added 21 and Caroline Lau had 10. Northwestern went 0 for 11 from 3-point range in the second half.

Walsh and Daley combined for 25 points on 11 of 18 shooting in the first half to help Northwestern take a 39-35 lead. The Wildcats went 3 of 7 behind the arc and shot 50% overall.

Northwestern had an 8-0 run in the first quarter and led 20-18 at the end.

Walsh had six points in an 8-0 run that pushed Northwestern's lead to 49-37 in the middle of the third quarter. Jones had eight points and Ellis had seven, with a three-point play by Jones cutting Purdue's deficit to 55-52 entering the fourth with momentum on their side.

British Open will reduce its age limit to 55 for future champions

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP Golf Writer

The British Open is reducing the age limit to 55 for winners of the claret jug this year and beyond, part of a few tweaks to its exemption categories announced Wednesday.

Among the changes are to take the leading five players from the International Federation Ranking — the top players from the money lists of Japan, Asian, Australian and South

African tours, plus the next-highest player in the world ranking from those tours.

That provides a path this year for Andy Ogletree, now with Saudi-funded LIV Golf, who won the Asian Tour Order of Merit last year. The PGA Championship also has provided spots from the International Federation Ranking.

The 152nd British Open is July 18-21 at Royal Troon in Scotland.

News-Banner Scoreboard

BASKETBALL

High School

Boys' Basketball Regional Schedule

4A

East Chicago Central vs. Mishawaka
Fort Wayne North Side vs. Fort Wayne Wayne
Kokomo vs. Fishers
New Palestine vs. Ben Davis
Franklin Community vs. Center Grove
Avon vs. Lawrence North
Jeffersonville vs. Evansville Harrison

3A

Peru vs. West Lafayette
Glenn vs. Suth Bend St. Joseph
Delta vs. Fort Wayne Concordia Lutheran
Batesville vs. scottsburg
Northview vs. Danville
Guerin Catholic vs. Indianapolis
George Washington
Southridge vs. Evansville Bosse

2A

North Judson-San Pierre vs. 21st Century — Gary
Wapahani vs. Tipton
Wabash vs. Westview
Fort Wayne Blackhawk Christian vs. Lafayette Central Catholic
Switzerland County vs. Forest Park
Irvington Prep vs. Park Tudor
Sullivan vs. Brownstown Central
Parke Heritage vs. Northeastern

1A

Marquette Catholic vs. DeMotte Christian
Seton Catholic vs. Libery Christian
Tri-County vs. Elkhart Christian
Fort Wayne Canterbury vs. North Vermillion
Bethesda Christian vs. Clay City
Oldenburg Academy vs. Greenwood Christian
Christian Academy of Indiana vs. Barr-Reeve
Trinity Lutheran vs. Evansville Christian

College

Men's Basketball Scores

Wednesday, Mar. 6

EAST

CCSU 71, St. Francis (Pa.) 62
George Washington 69, Rhode Island 51
George Washington 86, St. Bonaventure 75
Le Moyne 82, Fairleigh Dickinson 61
Merrimack 72, LIU 66
Seton Hall 66, Villanova 56
TCU 93, West Virginia 81
Wagner 60, Sacred Heart 57

SOUTH

Boston College 67, Miami 57
Charlotte 69, Rice 64
Houston 67, UCF 59
Loyola Chicago 69, Davidson 59
Richmond 73, Saint Joseph's 66

Tennessee 66, South Carolina 59

MIDWEST

Indiana 70, Minnesota 55
Michigan St. 53, Northwestern 49

SOUTHWEST

Arkansas 94, LSU 83

Women's Basketball Scores

Wednesday, Mar. 6

EAST

American 73, Loyola (Md.) 70
Buffalo 77, Cent. Michigan 68
Colgate 77, Boston U. 40
Holy Cross 77, Lafayette 69
Lehigh 64, Army 51
Navy 55, Bucknell 49
Temple 74, FAU 53

SOUTH

Appalachian St. 73, Georgia St. 68
Boston College 85, Clemson 72
Florida 66, Missouri 60
Georgia Tech 73, Pittsburgh 60
Kentucky 64, Georgia 50
Louisiana-Monroe 78, Georgia Southern 57
Middle Tennessee 67, Liberty 52
New Orleans 67, McNeese St. 64
Southern Miss. 70, Coastal Carolina 53
Tennessee St. 58, Morehead St. 50
Tennessee Tech 78, W. Illinois 69
UNC-Asheville 75, Gardner-Webb 74

MIDWEST

Wake Forest 58, Virginia 55

Ball St. 75, Kent St. 71

Bowling Green 87, W. Michigan 73
Dayton 66, St. Bonaventure 52
N. Illinois 56, Miami (Ohio) 46
Ohio 72, Akron 63
Purdue 78, Northwestern 72
Toledo 87, E. Michigan 41

SOUTHWEST

Louisiana Tech 71, Sam Houston St. 57
Texas A&M Commerce 69, Northwestern St. 58
Texas A&M-CC 65, Incarnate Word 43

FAR WEST

California 65, Washington St. 44
Colorado 79, Oregon 30

Detroit 9 52 .148 31%

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

W	L	Pct	GB	
New Orleans	37	25	.597	—
Dallas	34	28	.548	3
Houston	27	35	.435	10
Memphis	22	41	.349	15½
San Antonio	13	49	.210	24

Northwest Division

W	L	Pct	GB	
Minnesota	43	19	.694	—
Oklahoma City	42	19	.689	½
Denver	42	20	.677	1
Utah	28	34	.452	15
Portland	17	43	.283	25

Pacific Division

W	L	Pct	GB	
L.A. Clippers	40	21	.656	—
Phoenix	36	26	.581	4½
Sacramento	34	26	.567	5½
L.A. Lakers	34	29	.540	7
Golden State	32	28	.533	7½

Wednesday's Games

Orlando 119, Washington 109
Atlanta 112, Cleveland 101
L.A. Clippers 122, Houston 116
Memphis 115, Philadelphia 109
Chicago at Utah, 9 p.m.
Milwaukee at Golden State, late
Oklahoma City at Portland, late
Sacramento at L.A. Lakers, late

Thursday's Games

Brooklyn at Detroit, 7 p.m.
Minnesota at Indiana, 7 p.m.
Miami at Dallas, 7:30 p.m.
Toronto at Phoenix, 9 p.m.
Boston at Denver, 10 p.m.
Chicago at Golden State, 10 p.m.
San Antonio at Sacramento, 10 p.m.

HOCKEY

NHL

Tuesday's Games

Pittsburgh 5, Columbus 3
Florida 5, New Jersey 3
N.Y. Islanders 4, St. Louis 2
Edmonton 2, Boston 1, OT
Seattle 4, Winnipeg 3
Montreal 4, Nashville 3, OT
Chicago 5, Arizona 2
Vancouver 2, Los Angeles 1, OT
Dallas 7, San Jose 6, OT

Wednesday's Games

Toronto 2, Buffalo 1, OT
Detroit at Colorado, late
Ottawa at Anaheim, late

Thursday's Games

Calgary at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m.
Edmonton at Columbus, 7 p.m.
Montreal at Carolina, 7 p.m.
Philadelphia at Florida, 7 p.m.
St. Louis at New Jersey, 7 p.m.
Toronto at Boston, 7 p.m.
Washington at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Buffalo at Nashville, 8 p.m.
Minnesota at Arizona, 9 p.m.
Vancouver at Vegas, 10 p.m.
N.Y. Islanders at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.
Ottawa at Los Angeles, 10:30 p.m.



NASCAR CUP SERIES

Shriners Children's 500

Site: Avondale, Arizona.
Schedule: Friday, practice, 5:05 p.m.; Saturday, qualifying, 2:10 p.m.; Sunday, race, 3:30 p.m. (FOX).
Track: Phoenix Raceway.
Last race: Kyle Larson swept all three stages and won at Las Vegas.
Next race: March 17, Bristol, Tennessee.

NASCAR XFINITY SERIES

Call 811.com Every Dig. Every Time. 200

Site: Avondale, Arizona.
Schedule: Saturday, practice, 12:30 p.m., qualifying, 1 p.m. and race, 4:30 p.m. (FS1).
Track: Phoenix Raceway.
Last race: John Hunter Nemechek beat pole-sitter Cole Custer by 4.3 seconds at Las Vegas.
Next race: March 23, Austin, Texas.

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES

Last race: Rajah Caruth became the third Black driver to win in one of NASCAR's three national series, winning after starting on the pole at Las Vegas.
Next race: March 16, Bristol, Tennessee.

FORMULA ONE

Saudi Arabia Grand Prix

Site: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
Schedule: Friday, practice, 8:30 a.m. and noon; Saturday, practice, 8:30 a.m. and qualifying, noon; Sunday, race, noon (ESPN).
Last race: Three-time defending series champion Max Verstappen won from the pole position.
Next race: March 24, Melbourne, Australia.

INDYCAR

Firestone Grand Prix

Site: St. Petersburg, Florida.
Schedule: Friday, practice, 2:45 p.m.; Saturday, practice, 9:35 a.m., and qualifying, 2 p.m.-3 p.m.; Sunday, race, 12:15 (NBC).
Track: St. Petersburg road course.
Last race: Scott Dixon won last year's season finale at Laguna Seca, his third win of the season, all in the last four races. The six-time champion gave Chip Ganassi Racing a 1-2 finish in the standings.
Next race: March 24, Thermal, California.

NHRA DRAG RACING

Next event: March 7-10, Gainesville, Florida.

WORLD OF OUTLAWS

Next event: March 7-10, Gainesville, Florida.

It's OK to Shop and Compare...

Then come to Hiday.

It'll be like watching the sun come out after the rain.

HIDAY AUTOMOTIVE GROUP

CHRYSLER-DODGE-JEEP-RAM CHEVROLET

1791 N. Main St., Bluffton 1743 N. Main St., Bluffton
260-824-1931 • 888-824-0901 260-824-0900 • 800-824-0901

www.hidaymotors.com

Service with a Smile!

Barry Scott Service Manager
Mark Foreman Service Consultant
Marion Wells Service Consultant

Hiday Motors

1743 N. Main St., Bluffton • 824-0900

INNOVATIVE CONCEPTS AUDIO VIDEO SECURITY NETWORKING

Be Summer Ready

The Best On The Water. Loud & Clear!
• Sound Systems for boats

Powerful Sound For Off-Road Adventure
• RV's • Golf Carts • ATV's

(260) 724-2276
1421 Manchester St., Decatur
1/2 block west of U.S. 27 North

www.icav.us

PRECISION SERVICE

Family, Farm and Fleet Vehicle Repair
FLEET ACCOUNTS AVAILABLE
0520 S. Decker Dr. Bluffton

"The Quality Service You Deserve!"
260-824-9149 **FREE ESTIMATES**

Bluffton Tire Inc.
1308 S. Main St. Bluffton

10% OFF Discontinued Closeout Tires
1-260-824-0418

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 in exactly one position.

King Classic Sudoku

6	5				9	8		
	4		2					5
								6
	1		9	7	2			8
	8	7		3	5			
	9	5		6		7		
	6	4	7		3		1	
		9						
					8		5	4

©2024 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Difficulty: ★★★

3/7

FOR SALE

Miscellaneous

EVEREST VX3 ICE & WATER VENDING MACHINE This Everest VX3 water/ice vending machine is the perfect addition to any business looking to boost their profits. With the ability to dispense both water and ice, this unit is sure to be a hit with customers. The machine is in great working condition and has been slightly used, making it a cost-effective option for those looking to invest in a vending machine. This unit is made in the United States and comes with a unit quantity of 1. Included is an all season insulation package, ice shield ozone disinfection, and cold fusion energy recovery. It is perfect for placement in other beverage and snack vending locations, as well as in restaurant and food service settings. Don't miss out on the opportunity to make extra money with this Everest VX3 vending machine. \$45,000.00 260-273-7020 glaciempure@outlook.com

EMPLOYMENT

Help Wanted

THE CITY OF Bluffton Street Department is accepting applications for a Laborer/Truck Driver. The minimum educational requirement is a high school diploma or equivalent. Applicants must possess and maintain a CDL License or obtain one within the time limit. The City utilizes E-Verify and follows EEOC guidelines. Applications may be obtained from the Clerk Treasurer's office, 128 East Market St, Bluffton, IN between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm Monday-Friday or at www.blufftonindiana.net.

Help Wanted

WELLS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE is currently seeking applicants for the position of Full Time Deputy Sheriff. Applicants must be a US Citizen, at least 21 years of age upon graduation from police academy, possess a high school diploma or equivalent as well as a valid Indiana Operators License. Applicant can't have any felony convictions. Applicants must pass all aspects of the hiring process including physical agility testing, written examination, background investigation, oral interview, polygraph and physiological evaluation. Selected applicant must be able to graduate from the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy. ILEA certified applicants do not have to attend the physical agility and written examination portion of the process. 20-year matrix salary range for a Deputy Sheriff (no rank) is \$56,600 - \$68,400. Years of service and experience will be honored for a starting salary up to five years in the pay matrix. Pre-Application can be found on our website at www.wellscountysheriff.com. Once pre-application is completed, details on the paper application will be emailed to the applicant. Return completed paper application to 1615 W Western Ave, Bluffton, Indiana 46714 Attn: Chief Deputy Randy Steele no later than 12:00 pm on March 15, 2024.

SERVICES

Services

MARV'S CONSTRUCTION Room additions, fix old saggy floors, all types remodeling. Redo bathrooms, old foundation repairs. Marv Schwartz: 260-525-8877.

ETHAN'S OUTDOOR SERVICES LLC Lawn Care, Lawn Rolling, Spring & Fall Clean Ups, Landscaping & Grass Seeding. Call Ethan today for a free estimate. 260-827-7945. 260-827-7945 ethansoutdoor@gmail.com

GET DISH SATELLITE TV + Internet! Free Install, Free HD-DVR Upgrade, 80,000 On-Demand Movies, Plus Limited Time Up To \$600 In Gift Cards. Call Today! 1-855-551-9764 (I)

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.

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR AREA PLAN COMMISSION 3/1/2024

Notice is hereby given that the AREA PLAN COMMISSION will hold a Public Hearing in Conference Room 105 in the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St., in the City of Bluffton, IN at 7:00 o'clock P.M. on the 21st day of March, 2024, for the purpose of reviewing and hearing comment on the request of FIT Development LLC, 1254 N 500W, Decatur, IN 46733 for the purpose of a Major Subdivision.

Current Zoning: R-1
Proposed Major Subdivision: 8 Lots
Common Location: The subject property is located at east side of 300 E (Wayne St.) and south of SR 116 (Harrison St.), Bluffton, Indiana. 46714

Brief Legal: The subject property is described as 47.62 acres SW/4 10-26N-12E in Harrison Township of Wells County, Indiana. Dated this 1st day of March, 2024

WELLS COUNTY AREA PLAN COMMISSION
Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., Director
oj, nb 3/7
hspaxlp

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS 3/1/2024

Notice is hereby given that the BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS will hold a Public Hearing in Conference Room 105 in the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St., in the City of Bluffton, IN at 7:00 o'clock P.M. on the 19th day of March, 2024, for the purpose of reviewing and hearing comment on the request of AMZ Rentals LLC, 3011 S Meridian, Bluffton, IN 46714 for the purpose of a Variance.

Current Zoning: B-2
Proposed Variance: To reduce the rear yard setback from 5' to 4' for a building addition
Common Location: The subject property is located at 702 W Washington St., Bluffton, Indiana, 46714.

Brief Legal: The subject property is described as Lot 6 of RW & JW Townleys West Addition in the NW quarter of Section 4 Township 26N Range 12E in Harrison Township, Indiana. Dated this 1st day of March, 2024

WELLS COUNTY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., Director
oj, nb 3/7
hspaxlp

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR AREA PLAN COMMISSION 3/1/2024

Notice is hereby given that the AREA PLAN COMMISSION will hold a Public Hearing in Conference Room 105 in the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St., in the City of Bluffton, IN at 7:00 o'clock P.M. on the 21st day of March, 2024, for the purpose of reviewing and hearing comment on the request of Jason Meyer & Cassandra Meyer, 208 Bittersweet Lane, Ossian, IN 46777 for the purpose of a Rezoning.

Current Zoning: R-1
Proposed Rezoning: B-3
Common Location: The subject property is located at 10350 N SR 1, Ossia, Indiana. 46777

Brief Legal: The subject property is described as DW Hooping-garner Subdivision Lots 6-8 in the SE/4 9-28N-12E in Jefferson Township of Wells County, Indiana. Dated this 1st day of March, 2024

WELLS COUNTY AREA PLAN COMMISSION
Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., Director
oj, nb 3/7
hspaxlp

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS 3/1/2024

Notice is hereby given that the BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS will hold a Public Hearing in Conference Room 105 in the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St., in the City of Bluffton, IN at 7:00 o'clock P.M. on the 19th day of March, 2024, for the purpose of reviewing and hearing comment on the request of Scott A & Dayle A Mentzer, 628 E South St., Bluffton, IN 46714 for the purpose of a Variance.

Current Zoning: R-1
Proposed Variance: To increase the size allowance of a residential accessory structure from 1500 Sq Ft to 2436 sq ft for garage and porch

Common Location: The subject property is located at 628 E South St. Bluffton, Indiana, 46714.

Brief Legal: The subject property is described as 3.17 acres in the SW quarter of Section 3 Township 26N Range 12E in Harrison Township, Indiana. Dated this 1st day of March, 2024

WELLS COUNTY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., Director
oj, nb 3/7
hspaxlp

RENTALS

Wanted to Rent

SMALL BUILDING FOR antique restoration project west of Bluffton, south of Uniondale. Approximately a two year project. Access to electricity needed. Call 386-965-3191.

Lottery Numbers

Wednesday's Drawings HOOSIER LOTTERY Cash 5 — 15-16-30-36-42

Lotto Plus — 13-36-40-42-45-46

Cash4Life — 10-26-44-52-55, Cash Ball: 01

Quick Draw Midday — 03-09-17-24-35-36-39-41-43-45-52-53-58-60-62-66-69-70-71-74, BE: 53

Daily Three-Midday — 02-07-01, SB: 06

Daily Three-Evening — 03-07-06, SB: 00

Daily Four-Midday — 04-06-03-04, SB: 06

Daily Four-Evening — 08-01-00-06, SB: 00

Quick Draw Evening — 08-10-12-16-19-20-32-35-38-42-43-45-46-48-62-63-72-73-77-79, BE: 46

Hoosier Lotto — 01-09-18-31-33-45

MEGA MILLIONS

Estimated jackpot (for Friday): \$687 million

POWERBALL

06-19-28-44-60 Powerball: 10; Power Play: 2X



HOLLEY SALES, INC. is looking for an experienced medium duty / heavy duty truck mechanic. Full-time. Starting pay is \$25.00 per hour. 40-45 hours per week. Some Saturday mornings required. Paid uniforms. Vacation & holiday pay. Please apply in person at 12005 Indianapolis Rd. Yoder, IN 46798 or send your resume to dirk@holleytruckparts.com. For more information, call 260-478-7411.

Follow us at... twitter.com/newsbanner

SUDOKU ANSWER

4	9	8	6	9	2	1	1
7	8	9	4	2	1	6	5
6	1	2	5	9	7	9	8
5	2	1	1	9	8	5	6
1	9	6	5	4	7	8	2
8	4	9	2	1	6	9	1
9	5	7	7	1	9	8	2
9	6	1	9	8	2	5	7
2	7	8	6	4	5	1	9

Tab Rate Chart for the year 2023 Payable 2024

Notice is hereby given that the Tax Duplicates for the Taxing Units of Wells County, for the year 2023 payable 2024, are now in the hands of the Wells County Auditor, who is ready to receive the Taxes charged thereon. The following table shows the rate of taxation on each \$100.00 of Taxable Real Estate, Personal Property and Mobile Homes. The first installment will be delinquent after May 10, 2024. Second installment will be delinquent after November 12, 2024. Lisa McCormick, Auditor, Auditor of Wells County.

Fund	Fund Name	90 001	90 002	90 003	90 004	90 005	90 006	90 007	90 008	90 009	90 010	90 011	90 012	90 013	90 014	90 015	90 016	90 017	90 018	90 019	90 020	90 021	90 022
		Chester	Poneto - Chester	Harrison	Bluffton - Harrison	Poneto - Harrison	Vera Cruz	Jackson	Jefferson	Ossian	Lancaster	Bluffton City - Lancaster NW	Bluffton City - Lancaster - BH	Liberty	Poneto - Liberty	Nottingham	Rockcreek	Markle - Rockcreek	Uniondale - Rockcreek	Union	Markle - Union	Uniondale - Union	Zanesville
61	County Rainy Day																						
101	Wells County General	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678	0.1678
124	20015 Reassessment	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131	0.0131
702	Highway																						
706	Local Road & Street																						
790	County Cum Bridge	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250	0.0250
801	Health	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072	0.0072
2003	County 4-H	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034
2391	County Cum Capital Development	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333	0.0333
90 1	Total COUNTY	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498	0.2498
61	Township Rainy Day																						
101	Township General								0.0022	0.0022										0.0059	0.0059	0.0059	0.0059
840	Township Assistance								0.0095	0.0095	0.0107	0.0107	0.0107							0.0020	0.0020	0.0020	0.0020
1101	TWP Emerg Ambul/ Med Fire																						
1111	Township Fire													0.0191									
1181	Township Fire Bldg Debt								0.0055	0.0534				0.0148						0.0055			
1182	TWP Fire Equipment Debt									0.0255											0.0174		
1190	TWP Cum Fire	0.0200																					
8604	Special Fire Territory General									0.0007													0.0119
8692	Special Fire Territory Equip.																						
90 2	Total TOWNSHIP	0.0200	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0055	0.0913	0.0117	0.0107	0.0107	0.0107	0.0515	0.0058	0.0454	0.0532	0.0171	0.0171	0.0427	0.0079	0.0079	0.0079
61	CORP Rainy Day																						
101	Corp General		0.7427		0.1228	0.7427	0.0907		0.1098					0.1228	0.1228	0.7427			0.9747	0.2959			0.0659
342	CORP Police Pension																						
706	CORP Road & Street																						
708	CORP Motor Vehicle Highway				0.1187					0.1244			0.1187	0.1187									
1108	Municipal Fire																						0.1524
1111	CORP Fire																						
1191	CORP Cum Fire Special									0.0167													
1301	CORP Park & Recreation				0.1219								0.1219	0.1219									
1303	CORP Park								0.0229	0.0229													

State of the Union: What to watch as Biden addresses the nation

By CHRIS MEGERIAN
Associated Press
 WASHINGTON (AP) — The State of the Union speech is one of the biggest pieces of political theater every year. It's rooted in a simple requirement in the U.S. Constitution that directs the president to "give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." But in modern times, it's a televised extravaganza where every detail is carefully scrutinized.

Here's how to watch and what to look for during Thursday's address by President Joe Biden.

Where to find it
 You can find the State of the Union on all major networks, which will be carrying it live. It will also be streamed online by the White House and The Associated Press. The speech starts at 9 p.m. ET.

Cast of characters
 You might notice a new face behind Biden when he starts his speech. Rep. Mike Johnson of Louisiana became the House speaker in October after unhappy Republicans ousted Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California. Rep. Nancy Pelosi had the job before McCarthy but lost it when Democrats failed to keep the majority in the 2022 midterm elections.

That makes Johnson the third House speaker to sit behind Biden during a State of the Union,

reflecting the political instability in Washington and a challenging shift for Biden. House leadership has fallen further under the sway of the chamber's right flank, making it harder for the president to cut deals with the opposing party.

Biden's age
 No president gets a free pass on the world's biggest stage, but Biden will be watched more carefully than most because of his age. At 81 years old, he's the oldest commander-in-chief in history, and he would be 86 at the end of a potential second term.

Donald Trump, Biden's Republican predecessor and likely opponent in this year's election, is 77. A majority of U.S. adults doubt either of them have the mental capabilities to serve as president, according to a new survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The State of the Union is a chance for Biden to dispel doubts about whether he's up for the job at an age when most Americans are retired. Any verbal slips or apparent confusion would provide fodder for his opponents.

Policy agenda
 Keep your ears open for any new policy proposals. The State of the Union is a chance for presidents to lay out their goals and rally Americans to support their plans. For example, Biden used a previous speech to discuss his "unity agenda," which included

expanded healthcare benefits for veterans.

The White House hasn't disclosed specific proposals that will be in this year's speech. But he could reference unfinished business from his first term, and he'll likely press for military assistance for Ukraine to reinforce American leadership overseas.

Special guests
 There are more than just lawmakers and top officials in the chamber for the speech. Politicians bring guests to the gallery to put a face to whatever issue they want to highlight.

The most high-profile guests are invited by the White House and are often recognized during the president's speech. So far the White House has disclosed only one, Kate Cox, a Texas woman who was unable to get an abortion in her home state even though her health was in danger and her fetus had a fatal condition. Democrats are eager to demonstrate how the U.S. Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v. Wade has limited reproductive rights.

Lawmakers will have their own guests too. Johnson and two New York representatives are bringing police officers whose brawl with migrants in Times Square caused a political uproar among Republicans who have blamed Biden for loose border security. Rep. Elise Stefanik, another New York Republican, invited a Border

Patrol officer who also serves as a union official.

Fashion statements
 Television cameras will pan across the chamber during the State of the Union, so you'll have a clear view of everyone in the audience too. This is a chance for lawmakers and guests to send a message of their own with their clothing.

Democratic women wore white, the color of the women's suffrage movement, during Trump's State of the Union in 2019. In 2022, some lawmakers wore blue and yellow ribbons to show their support for Ukraine. (The country's ambassador to the United States, Oksana Markarova, was a guest as well.)

Protest potential
 You might think that everything about the State of the Union is scripted, but that's not the case. Even in a tightly controlled environment, it's still possible that someone could stage an interruption. Biden has been shadowed around the country by protests over his support for Israel's war in Gaza. Activists have also planned a demonstration in Lafayette Square near the White House before the speech.

In addition, Republicans have earned a reputation for interruptions. Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Lauren Boebert of Colorado heckled Biden during his State of the Union in 2022. Then in 2023,

some Republicans shouted at Biden when he accused them of trying to cut Social Security and Medicare. "I enjoy conversation," Biden said as he urged Congress to unite behind protecting the safety net programs.

Johnson is trying to tamp down on outbursts from his caucus. He encouraged House Republicans to show "decorum" during the speech, according to a person familiar with his remarks at a private meeting on Wednesday.

Protests can come in other forms too. Pelosi theatrically ripped up a copy of Trump's speech after the State of the Union in 2020.

Republican response
 If you're not tired of politics when the State of the Union is over, stay tuned for more. The opposing party traditionally stages its own response to the speech. This year, Republicans chose Sen. Katie Britt of Alabama. At 41 years old, she's the youngest female senator and some party leaders hope she could be a rising star.

But whatever she says, many will be waiting to see Trump's own response. In a post on his Truth Social account, Trump promised to provide "LIVE, Play by Play" commentary on Biden's speech. As Trump cruises toward the Republican presidential nomination, his remarks will help frame the stakes of the election.

Pressure grows on Israel to open more aid routes into Gaza

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP)
 — Efforts to get desperately needed humanitarian aid to war-wracked northern Gaza gained momentum Wednesday with the European Union increasing pressure for the creation of a sea route from Cyprus to Gaza and British Foreign Minister David Cameron saying that Israel's allies were losing patience.

While aid groups say all of Gaza is mired in a humanitarian crisis, the situation in the largely isolated north stands out. Many of the estimated 300,000 people still living there have been reduced to eating animal fodder to survive. The U.N. says that one in six children under the age of 2 in the north suffers from acute malnutrition.

Amid the global pressure to alleviate the crisis, two Israeli officials said Wednesday the government will begin allowing aid to move directly from its territory into northern Gaza and will also cooperate with the creation of the sea route from Cyprus.

Israel would allow 20 to 30 aid trucks to enter northern Gaza from Israel on Friday, the start of more regular deliveries via that route, one of the officials said. It will also begin doing security checks Sunday on aid in Cyprus before it's delivered via sea to Gaza, the official said. The ship will be part of a pilot project to test the feasibility of the sea route. The aid is UAE-funded and made possible with US involvement.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the upcoming shipments with the media.

Aid groups have said it has become nearly impossible to deliver supplies within most of Gaza because of the difficulty of coordinating with the Israeli military, the ongoing hostilities and the breakdown of public order. It is even more difficult to get aid to the north.

Trucks carrying humanitarian aid have to drive from

the Rafah crossing with Egypt or the Kerem Shalom crossing with Israel, both on the southern edge of Gaza, through the conflict zone to reach the largely cut-off areas in the north.

Last week, an attempt by the Israeli military to facilitate the movement of aid ended in tragedy when more than 100 Palestinians were fatally shot by Israeli forces or trampled to death in a melee.

On Wednesday, hundreds of people ran along a sea-side road on the outskirts of Gaza City to collect bags of flour and boxes of water and canned food donated by Turkey and Egypt and were part of a shipment trucked in from southern Gaza.

British Foreign Secretary David Cameron met with Benny Gantz, a visiting member of Israel's war Cabinet, and pressed him to increase the flow of aid into Gaza.

"We are still not seeing improvements on the ground. This must change,"

Cameron said in a statement posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

South Africa, which filed a genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice, asked the court

Wednesday to order Israel to allow in aid "to address famine and starvation" in Gaza.

Meanwhile, European Union Commission Chief Ursula von der Leyen will visit Cyprus on Friday to

inspect installations at the port of Larnaca, from where aid would leave for Gaza if a sea route is established. Cypriot government spokesman Constantinos Letymbitis said.

Public Sale Calendar

BIDDING CLOSING MARCH 14 - 10 a.m. EST - Clemens and Carol Burger, owners. Ken-Bar Tool & Engineering Company liquidation! Over 300 lots. 2016 GMC Sierra, 2005 Chevrolet 3500 cargo van, 2008 Mercury Grand Marquis, CNC machines, mills, lathes, ladders, grinders, saws, tooling, tools, more! Preview March 11, 10 a.m.-noon, 3121 S. Walnut St., Muncie, call for information. Pickup March 18 and 19, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., large items can be picked up by appointment only up to 10 days. **Krueckeburg Auction & Realty LLC**, 260-724-7402, kjauction.com.

MARCH 14 - 6 p.m. - Denver Neuenschwander Estate, sellers. Lehman Park, 212 Park Ave., Berne. 135+/- acres available. Selling in 3 tracts, as a combination or whole unit. Tract 1: 39+/- acres along SR 116, tillable/woods. Tract 2: 48+/- acres along 1000 S, tillable. Tract 3: 48+/- acres along 1000 S, tillable. **Heartland Auction & Realty, Inc.**, 260-724-3499, heartlandauctionrealty.com.

MARCH 17-25 - (Online Only Auction) - Various consignors, seller. Antiques, primitives, Lionel trains and train items, modern furniture, vintage advertising, household items, patio furniture. Auction Preview: March 19 and March 21 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 118 East Craig St., Ossian, IN. **The Steffen Group Inc.**, 260-824-3006, www.steffengrp.com.
MARCH 23 - 10 a.m. - Various owners represented. Location: Farmers Grain & Ag LLC,

1257 St. Rd. 33, Willshire, OH. Tractors, combines, heads & carts, harvest equip., Grain carts, wagons, trucks, trailers, pickups, construction, manure equipment, livestock equipment, hay equipment, planters, no-till drills, sprayers, NH3 bars, farm related, miscellaneous, mowers & ATVs, toys, native lumber. Questions, call: Farmers Grain & Ag, LLC, 419-495-2338. Auction managers: Ritter Cox, 800-451-2709, 260-609-3306 & Tim Kreider, 260-413-8008. **Schrader Real Estate and Auction Company, Inc.**, 260-244-7606, 800-451-2709, SchraderAuction.com.
MARCH 23-30 - (Online Only Auction) - The Estate of Sandra McCay and others, seller. 2007 Dodge Caliber SXT sedan, 1999 Ford F250 with dump bed, 2013 12' utility trailer, primitives, Turn of the Century cast iron riding horse, quilts, large qty. of crocks, antique furniture, Fenton, Carnival and other glassware. Pre-

view: March 21, March 28 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 816 S. 11th Street, Decatur, IN. **The Steffen Group Inc.**, 260-824-3006, www.steffengrp.com.
APRIL 7-14 - (Online Only Auction) - Unique Blue Bar and Grill (Formerly Stag Bar), seller. Ongoing needs. Outstanding collection of beer signs, neon signs, beer taps, collectibles, tools, much more. Preview: April 4 and April 11 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 205 W. Market St., Bluffton, IN. **The Steffen Group Inc.**, http://www.steffengrp.com, 260-824-3006.

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR AREA PLAN COMMISSION 3/1/2024

Notice is hereby given that the AREA PLAN COMMISSION will hold a Public Hearing in Conference Room 105 in the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St., in the City of Bluffton, IN at 7:00 o'clock P.M. on the 21st day of March, 2024, for the purpose of reviewing and hearing comment on the request of Solid Rock Rentals LLC, 515 S SR 201, Bluffton, IN 46714 for the purpose of a Rezoning.
Current Zoning: R-2
Proposed Rezoning: R-3
Common Location: The subject property is located at 328 S Union, Bluffton, Indiana. 46714
Brief Legal: The subject property is described as 0.18 ac in the NW/4 4-26N-12E in Harrison Township of Wells County, Indiana.
 Dated this 1st day of March, 2024
WELLS COUNTY AREA PLAN COMMISSION
 Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., Director
 oj, nb 3/7 hspaxlp

Public Notices

NOTICE
 Notice is hereby given that the Board of Directors of the Bluffton-Harrison Middle School Building Corporation shall convene on Monday, March 18, 2024, at 12:00 p.m. at 805 East Harrison Street, Bluffton, Indiana to determine the lessor representative and review the status of lease rental bond obligations, amortization schedules and 2024 debt service fund.
Bluffton-Harrison Middle School Building Corporation
 nb 3/7 hspaxlp

Rockcreek Township, Wells County, Indiana					
Cash Fund Statement - 2023					
Local Fund Number	Local Fund Name	Beg Cash Bal Jan 1, 2023	Receipts	Disbursements	End Cash Bal Dec. 31, 2023
0000	Fire Truck Loan	\$4,612.92	\$23,139.01	\$23,888.18	\$3,863.75
1	Cumulative Fire	\$32,831.74	\$13,113.65	\$0.00	\$45,945.39
102351	Excess Levy Fund	\$205.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$205.00
2	Ems	\$21,272.93	\$2,095.01	\$0.00	\$23,367.94
4	Fire Fighting	\$38,833.18	\$25,476.29	\$18,126.00	\$46,183.47
6	Township	\$200,385.68	\$34,251.70	\$14,247.17	\$202,390.21
7	Township Assistance	\$81,462.60	\$0.00	\$900.00	\$80,562.60
	GRAND TOTAL	\$379,604.05	\$98,075.66	\$57,161.35	\$420,518.36

March GOODS & SERVICES DIRECTORY

Jerry Flack & Associates
Jerry Flack & Julie Myers
 Retirement Advisors
 A Senior Citizen Answers Our Phone!
 OFFICE 260-824-1618 • Corner of Main & Market • Bluffton, IN

AMISH CREW
 will do roofing, siding, remodeling, pole barns. Specializing in redoing old barns. Free estimates. Call 260-438-2508

Home Remodel and Repair
 Locally Owned
 Repair Bowed Basement Walls
 Foundations repaired
 Floor joist repair or replaced
 Concrete • Doors
 Windows • Painting
 Tile • Small Jobs Welcome
 Text me at 260-301-1269
 Jim Baker

Genesis Pest Services
 Locally Owned by Geoffrey Horner
 260-227-0742
 geoff@genesispestservices.com

JC'S GARAGE DOOR SALES & SERVICE
 All makes & models • broken springs & cables
 Owner: James Fisher • Sales: Carl Fisher
 "50 Years of Combined Experience"
 Call us at 824-3262

Zap Electric, Inc.
 260-824-2927
 Commercial-Industrial-Residential
 24 Hr. Emergency Service
 Charles Miller-Electrician
 1233 W. Cherry St., Bluffton
 FREE Estimates

SWearingen Elder Law
 • Medicaid Planning
 • Durable Power of Attorney
 • Estate Planning & Deeds
 • Special Needs Trusts
 • Long Term Care Planning
 • In-Home Healthcare Planning
 • Wills, Living Wills, & Advance Healthcare Directives
 (260) 888-9256
 FREE INITIAL CONSULTATION!

HIDEAWAY BEER & BOURBON
THURSDAY - Dollar Off Drinks (Excludes Pop)
WEDNESDAY - KARAOKE
FRI. & SAT. - Live Music
 Follow us on Facebook for our events.
 123 S JOHNSON ST. • 824-0455

Sure-Flo Seamless Gutters
 5" & 6" Continuous Gutters
 Leaf Protection Systems
 Large Color Selection - FREE Estimates
 260-888-5062
 www.seamlessgutter.net

STOR-N-GO STORAGE UNITS
 2740 E. 200 N. • Bluffton, IN • 260.273.8345
 with Security Cameras

Primary Contracting, LLC
 Specializing in Building & Remodeling
 OWNER: Edwin Wickey
 Call for Spring Scheduling Today!
 Free Estimates - 260-233-4276

- Pole Barns
- Garages
- Vinyl Siding
- Metal Roofing
- Poly Decks
- Storm Damage

We Carry Prevacen and CBD Oil!
R Warren Pharmacy
 (260)375-2135
Nature's Sunshine Distributor
 222 N. Wayne St., Warren • 1-800-895-7035
 Terry Daniels, Pharmacist • Melinda Daniels, RV

A-1 U-Stor
 Safe & Secure Self Storage
824-1846
 • Safety Lighting • Clean Units
 • 24 Hr. Access
 • Video Cameras
 www.a1-ustor.com
 After hours & Saturdays
 Call 273-9678 or 824-4782
 In Monroe at corner of U.S. 27 and S.R. 124
 Office at 1180 N. Main, Bluffton

LANCASTER Senior Apartments
 1800 S. Wayne St. | Bluffton
 • 1 & 2 Bedrooms
 • Maintenance Free
 • All Ground-level
 • Private Entrances
 • Water Included
 260 824-5280
 TDD: 7-1-1
 For those 62+ or disabled, regardless of age.

YOUR BUSINESS IN THE NEWS-BANNER Every Day!
 For as little as ...
\$187 PER ISSUE
 Plus The Ossian Journal Every Week!
 Call 824-0224 or 622-4108
 Apr. deadline is Tues., Mar. 26!
 ... you can keep your name in the public eye!
 Increase your business with regular advertising!