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FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2024 BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection \$1.00

Whicker lauds city infrastructure and more to come

By JONATHAN SNYDER
In his State of the City address at the Wells Chamber of Commerce quarterly luncheon, Mayor John Whicker stated that the city is not standing still. Whicker cited new utility improvement projects and regulations, Parks Department's accomplishments, and the

new fire territory. Whicker started by highlighting the city's growing pains. Since the city has surpassed 10,000 residents, the Common Council needed to add two more members and a new district. Sarah Reed was elected District Five representative, and Blake Fiechter was elected to the At Large position.



Mayor John Whicker (pictured) as he gave his perspective on the state of the city on Thursday afternoon. (Photo by Sydney Kent)

Bluffton also received a notice from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management that it must adopt stormwater control regulations. Whicker stated that the rules are a "significant burden" and that property owners should expect a stormwater charge on utility bills in the future. Stormwater pipes are also being lined to reduce the amount of water traveling to the wastewater plant.

Additionally, a federal Environmental Protection Agency mandate states that Bluffton needs to identify any lead water pipes by October of this year. Whicker mentioned that the process had been underway for a couple

(Continued on Page 2)

Stringer looks toward growth, community strength in address

By HOLLY GASKILL
Looking at this past year and Wells County's future, Commissioner President Jeff Stringer expressed his desire to continue investing in future growth while maintaining a commitment to the taxpayer's investment.

A large part of which, he said, begins with the diverse opinions of people who are willing to push Wells forward and the partnership of the county, Bluffton and towns.

In the annual State of the County address Wednesday, Stringer referenced changes with commissioner-appointed boards, where he says more diverse opinions have been encouraged and boards have taken a more active role in their respective groups. He specifically cited the Board of Health, which has filled its long-time vacancy.

Stringer also recognized the tumultuous time the Health Department experienced this last year, with turnover in three full-time positions within the small department. He commended Marlene Hoag for keeping the Health Department afloat. Hoag returned from the position she had retired from not even a year prior and remained with the

(Continued on Page 2)



Commissioner Jeff Stringer spoke immediately following Mayor Whicker at the first Chamber quarterly luncheon of the year. (Photo by Sydney Kent)



Storms pass through Bluffton causing outages

By JONATHAN SNYDER
An electric power pole fell down on Thursday, leaving a section of North Main Street between State Road 124 and East Dustman Road closed for over eight hours. Because the pole needed replacing, the power was intentionally cut on the west side of State Road 1, from Madison Avenue to Lancaster Street. Most streets coming off of Lancaster also lost power for that period of time.
At 6 p.m., traffic extended for over a half a mile at the stop sign connecting North 450 East and SR-124 due to detours.
The outage also caused traffic lights at the North Main Street and SR-124 intersections to lose power, along with the Dustman Road and North Main Street intersections.
The weather conditions hindered the efforts to get



Pictured at top, the culprit of Thursday's extensive commutes and power issues. (Photos by Sydney Kent)
the area cleaned up, with heavy rains and winds pelting the area around 6 p.m. Tornado sirens were set off just before 6:30 p.m., which led to a longer clean-up time.
The Bluffton Police Department's Facebook stated that it hoped the work would be finished before 9 p.m. Chandler Gerber talked to police and electric, with both departments stating they were good to turn the power on at 10:34 p.m.

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Markle murder trial date delayed until late August

By SYDNEY KENT
Trial dates have been delayed for a Markle man accused of murdering his grandmother last fall. Anthony Castleman, 37, originally requested to exercise his right to a fast and speedy trial during his initial hearing in Huntington County last month.
According to Huntington County Prosecutor, Jeremy Nix, Castleman changed his mind following a meeting with his attorney. The five-day trial, originally scheduled to begin on April 22, is now expected to begin on August 26.
Additionally, Special Judge Honorable Samuel K. Conrad will now preside over the case.
Nix clarified that both the Huntington County Circuit and Superior Court judges have recused themselves from the case due to conflicts of interest.
A warrant for Castleman's arrest was filed after police found the body of Bernice "Dianna" Eubank, 72, with numerous stab wounds located on her property, where Cas-

(Continued on Page 2)

Park board makes summer hires, updates to parks

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Dilapidated fencing and dirt for a baseball diamond at Lions Park will be salvaged and the land reseeded for a grassy play area, a decision approved by the Bluffton Park Board on Thursday.
Parks Department Superintendent Brandy Fiechter stated that there has been some interest for soccer in that area. John Gerber supported the decision, noting that soccer has seen an increased interest throughout the United States for some time. The board also decided that the diamond dirt will be salvaged and sent to other diamonds that need it.
The board also approved Fiechter's recommended hirings for pool managers and maintenance positions, life-guards, concession workers and managers along with general park maintenance staff. Fiechter mentioned there were an "abundance" of applicants for this summer and that she's really happy with the group she is bringing in.
Regional tournaments for high school girls' tennis will have three courts from Washington Park available to them, thanks to Park Board approval. While the main courts used will be at Bluffton High School, the Indiana High School

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Outside

Cloudy and breezy today, cool and cloudy tonight

Today	Saturday	Sunday
High 52	High 58	High 42
Low 33	Low 35	Low 27

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Bluffton, IN 46714
Office Hours: By appointment only
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Whicker lauds infrastructure

(Continued from Page 1)
of months with Dave Hendricks, an influential figure in the proceedings. Whicker also stated that mandates for replacing these pipes will come later.

Furthermore, Community Crossings' street repaving program changed from a 20-80% city to INDOT match to a 50-50 split.

While the burdens are significant, Whicker is not blind to the good done throughout the city last year. He praised the improvements to the wastewater plant and wastewater collection projects on Dustman Road and Timberidge. James S. Jackson Company of Bluffton was awarded the wastewater plant job for \$31,860,000. The wastewater collection projects cost \$12,000,000.

"It is great to have a local connection with this (wastewater plant) project," Whicker said.

Whicker also mentioned

that work has begun on a new electric substation next to the Animal Shelter on Cherry Street, giving Bluffton additional capacity and redundancy. The estimated cost for the project currently totals around \$13,000,000, but Whicker mentioned that the amount could change hereafter.

In the public safety sector, Whicker mentioned the newly created fire territory involving Bluffton, Harrison and Lancaster townships. While Whicker did not shirk from the cost of personnel and equipment, citing that a 100-foot Pierce Aerial truck now costs \$2,500,000, the structure fires at Capri Apartments and the Gal-Ham building show the need for a properly equipped team. Whicker praised the Fire Department for handling the blazes, stating there was no loss of life in both instances.

Whicker also lauded an interlocal agreement that

routes county and city 911 calls to a single communication center operated by the city, allowing for consistent responses for Bluffton citizens.

There are two new housing sub-divisions under construction, with Whicker hoping that the Parlor Bluffs and Harvest Acres developments will help address the housing shortage in the city. Two new positions were created for the city, with the vacant City Engineer position able to track current and future projects and Director of Information Technology Karen Morris able to coordinate technological needs and give counsel on security in an age of cyber attacks. Whicker noted the importance of keeping technology current and that the city is working with a new city website for ease of business between the city and developers.

Whicker also praised the actions of the Parks Depart-

ment for developing Lancaster Park. He mentioned Brandy Fiechter's leadership in helping secure grants for the project and making that park a hallmark of the Northern Wells area.

Whicker further mentioned some challenges currently plaguing the city. Whicker noted that recruiting and retaining good employees for all departments has been challenging, along with keeping the city on a solid fiscal foundation. Whicker also mentioned that city cleanliness is a personal pet peeve and encouraged the city to keep trash and junk picked up.

Whicker hopes to make Bluffton an excellent place to live, work and raise a family while partnering with the county on projects that save taxpayers money. In closing, Whicker mentioned that the city "does not plan on standing still anytime soon."

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Weather

Friday, March 15, 2024

(24-hour observations at 9:44 p.m. Thursday)
High: 66; Low: 53; Precipitation: 2 inches of rain
Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 4.88 feet at 9:45 p.m. Thursday

Wells County forecast

Today: Cloudy, with a high near 52. North wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Tonight: Partly cloudy, with a low around 33. North wind 5 to 10 mph.

Saturday: Sunny, with a high near 58. Southwest wind 10 to 15 mph increasing to 15 to 20 mph in the afternoon. Winds could gust as high as 30 mph.

Saturday Night: A 20% chance of showers before 2 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 35. West wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 42.

Sunday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 27.

Monday: Partly sunny, with a high near 35.

Monday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 25.

Tuesday: Partly sunny, with a high near 45.

Tuesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 28.

Wednesday: Sunny, with a high near 47.

Wednesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 30.

Stringer looks toward growth

(Continued from Page 1)
department for over seven months. "She bailed us out," Stringer said, adding that Public Health Nurse Lynn Blevins was a "rock" for the department.

However, Springer stated that the county is "not done" with developments at the Health Department, and referenced the impending confirmation of the recent board-appointed new health officer, Dr. Brandon Huggins. The item is on the commissioners' agenda for its meeting at 5 p.m. on Monday.

In addition to board responsibility, Stringer expressed his desire for more accountability with organizations receiving county funding.

"If you take money from the taxpayer, you owe it back to the taxpayer to have a plan for where the money's going — a clear plan," Stringer stated.

Stringer then commended the efforts of the Regional Sewer District, which he said has opened up opportunities for the county to grow into new areas. He also highlighted Wells County Jail renovations and the new highway garage as significant developments in county infrastructure.

Even so, Stringer recognized there are significant obstacles to overcome — multiple key county roles have

experienced turnover in the last year, the county engineer position remains vacant and there's a critical need for firefighters.

He also emphasized the lack of youth remaining in the community, saying he wants to increase the amount of quality jobs and housing available. In doing so, Stringer referenced his children who have settled elsewhere.

"I would love to see them here," Stringer said. "I've lived all over. I stayed in Wells County because there's something different. I love raising my children here. It's a great community based in faith. It's a great community based on patriotism. I want that for my kids. I want that here."

Additionally, Stringer's outlook leaned heavily on what he saw as the strength of Wells County — its commitment to faith and country, the people's service and hard work, and the enduring community spirit.

"We, Wells County, are always willing to give time, effort and money to help — always," Stringer said. "When life deals us tragedies, natural disasters or challenges, Wells County stands up, unites, and pulls together, always has. For fundraisers, community service, prayer groups, and prayer circles, Wells County is united

and there for each other. We set aside differences and lift one another up, overcoming challenges, removing obstacles, and truly caring for one another. No matter what our difficulties are — yesterday, today or tomorrow — we will overcome them and move forward like we always have and always will."

In continuing this tradition, Stringer said the county government plans to continue partnering with the city of Bluffton and area towns to encourage growth and development in all areas. Exemplifying this, Stringer cited the recent partnership between the city and county for one dispatch center.

"We're working together, we're pooling efforts, we're pooling resources to make things better," he said.

Stringer ended by encouraging discussion and thanking for the community's participation thus far.

He concluded, "Thank you for the input, insight and support. It's been an honor and continues to be an honor for all three of us (commissioners) to serve. And let's make sure that we're still on that path, that as we go forward, we're building on that strong foundation of the community and we continue to grow and make Wells County strong."

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Parks board hires

(Continued from Page 1)
Athletic Association notified the department that they needed some extra space. The courts will be used May 21-22 from 3 p.m. to sundown.

The board also approved Family Center Services' request for Pickett's Run Park to play host to their annual duck race. The event will take place Aug. 10 with the race starting at noon.

The board also heard updates from Bluffton Youth Baseball and Softball while approving both organizations to use baseball diamonds at Roush and Jefferson Parks. Gary

Napier of Youth Baseball stated that they will hold a calendar fundraiser for their teams this year and dropping the home run derby and hit-a-thon. Napier also mentioned that the Koufax league, Bluffton's travel baseball program, will only have one 12-man team this year.

Bluffton Softball, however, is growing this year. Currently, it is estimated that 182 girls have signed up for softball this year with more sign up session to go. Softball typically sees 180-187 girls sign up every year. Because of this some practices will be held at the

smaller diamond at Jefferson Park.

The board was also notified that the department has started on siding work for the pool house, and that Wayne Asphalt will need to dig up some of the parking lots in Lancaster Park when they start to build the pickleball courts. Fiechter believes that Lancaster Park may need to be fully shut down so the work can be done.

The board also thanked donors from various events, along with two unrestricted donations from Huggins-Mann Pretzels Incorporated's Legacy Fund for \$3,800 and Tri-Kappa for

\$200. Donations for races throughout Wells totaled \$6,600 and money for Kehoe Park's Summer Concert Series totaled \$16,150. Fiechter mentioned that they are about at the halfway point of their goal for the concert series.

Fiechter also mentioned that the Daddy Daughter Dance on Feb. 18 was a very busy night, with 63.5 total volunteer hours recorded that day. Fiechter also hopes that the warmer weather will see more pavilion rentals. The department saw six total rentals throughout last month.

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Russia: Ukraine has fired more missiles at a border region on eve of election favoring Putin

By EMMA BURROWS
Associated Press

Ukraine fired at least eight missiles at Russia's Belgorod border region, killing two people and wounding 12, local officials said Thursday, as Kyiv's forces apparently kept up efforts to rattle the Kremlin on the eve of Russia's presidential election that is taking place amid a ruthless crackdown on dissent.

Also, Ukrainian forces attempted cross-border raids that were repelled in Belgorod and the Kursk region, according to local authorities. The Russian Defense Ministry claimed its troops killed 195 Ukrainian soldiers and destroyed five tanks and four armored infantry vehicles, two days after saying it killed 234 Ukrainian troops in another border assault.

It is not possible to independently verify the Russian claims. Cross-border attacks in the area have occurred sporadically since the war began and have been the subject of claims and counterclaims, as well as disinformation and propaganda.

The Ukrainian assaults on Russian territory in recent days, including long-range drone attacks and alleged incursions by Ukraine-based Russian proxies, have come as Russian President Vladimir Putin heads for near-certain reelection.

Putin has sought to persuade Russians to keep him in power against a backdrop of what he says are foreign threats to the country and as the Ukraine war stretches into its third year.

In a video released Thursday, Putin called on Russians to go to the polls,

calling participation in the election a "manifestation of patriotic feeling."

Claiming that "the only source of power in our country is the people," Putin told Russians, "you must not only cast your vote, but firmly declare your will and aspirations, your personal involvement in the further development of Russia."

Since coming to power almost 25 years ago, Putin has eliminated nearly all independent media and opposition voices in Russia, particularly after the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine that initially went badly wrong.

Analysts say the Kremlin is worried about low turnout during the three days of voting and needs Russians to participate to give legitimacy to Putin, who is almost certain to win another six-year term.

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Park passes ready for purchase

Ouabache State Park passes are now ready for purchase at the park office (or at the park gate on weekends). Sandy Shelly, at left, was purchasing hers from Property Manager Jon Winne. Cost is \$25 for seniors, \$50 for Indiana residents and \$70 for non-state residents. Beginning on the weekend of March 22 the gate house will be manned by either Carol Decker or Sandra Bayne. (Photo by Barbara Barbieri)

Holcomb casts doubts on antisemitism ban, signs Indiana happy hour bill

By **LESLIE BONILLA MUÑOZ**
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Gov. Eric Holcomb on Thursday strongly questioned a bill defining and banning antisemitism within the state's public education system.

He spoke to reporters after signing a bill legalizing happy hours and carry-out alcohol. And he weighed in on the ongoing race to succeed him as governor, as well as other bills left to sign: on public access, a firearms lawsuit and more.

House and Senate lawmakers struck a last-day compromise on House Enrolled Act 1002, which adopts the core International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

Holcomb indicated that compromise is crumbling.

"In the last 24 hours and maybe even late into Friday night, things have changed since then," he told reporters. "And I want to make sure whatever we do we get it right. And we don't just do it to do it."

People "far and wide" — including from outside the state — have contacted him with concerns, Holcomb said.

That's because, after hours of discussion and negotiations, the legislation excludes the working definition's 11 contentious "contemporary examples" of antisemitism, which include references to Israel.

Holcomb noted that 35 other states have adopted the full definition, and that leaving out the examples would make Indiana an "outlier."

"I want to make sure there's no ambiguity whatsoever in what statement Indiana makes to not only our own citizens first and foremost, but to the rest of the world," he said.

Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita on Tuesday called on Holcomb to veto the bill, which he dubbed a "toothless mess."

So did the Jewish American Affairs Committee of Indiana, which said it drafted the original bill. But the Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council said last week that it approved of the bill and believed the examples were incorporated "by reference."

Indiana law already bans discrimination on the basis of race and "creed," which means religion. The legislation specifies that antisemitism — bias against Jewish people — is religious discrimination and is not allowed within the public education system.

Members of the Hoosier Jewish community said the examples need to be codified, but critics maintained they're overly broad and limit free speech.

Happy hours become law

Holcomb was at Indianapolis' Whistle Stop Inn on Thursday for a celebratory signing of legislation legalizing happy hours and carry-out alcohol.

He praised lawmakers, with several who worked on the bill standing beside him in the warm, crowded pub.

"But this is really about the consumer and the small business person who is grinding it out every single day," Holcomb said. "It doesn't go into effect just yet."

"July 1, happy days are here again," he quipped from behind the bar, amid clapping.

Lawmakers decades ago banned such temporary sales, which are typically timed for just after the workday, to crack down on drunk driving. But Holcomb brushed off concerns in comments to reporters.

He also called on customers to drink responsibly — including by ordering food — and to proactively make "smart" transportation plans.

Holcomb talks governor's race, remaining bills

Holcomb, who's term-limited, has resisted endorsing one of the six Republicans running to replace him. A Democrat and Libertarian are also in the mix.

GOP candidates, he said, have espoused similar campaign rhetoric — but haven't offered many details on subjects that lawmakers "grapple with" or that eventually land on the governor's desk.

He said he wanted to hear more about community and economic development, long-term infrastructure plans, mental health, broadband, trails and Medicaid programs that led to a recent \$1 billion forecasting error.

Families who have resisted proposed cuts to a caretaking program for medically complex children protested Holcomb's appearance from outside the pub Thursday.

"I've heard many (candidates) say these are bold ideas. ... It's very important to have a vision, (but) more so to have the mission, the plans, to actually realize that vision," Holcomb said. "That's what I hope is shared because that will help whoever the next governor is carry out the plan of the day."

He also gave some insight into his plans for some his final yet-to-be-signed proposals: House Enrolled Act 1199, altering an Indianapolis-based taxing district; Holcomb said he's "listening to a number of community leaders" but added, "I think know where I am on this bill." The decision could come before Monday, he said.

House Enrolled Act 1235, ending a long-running local lawsuit against firearm manufacturers: He said he's read "every word" that Gary Mayor Eddie Melton has sent, but that it is "appropriate" for lawmakers to intervene in the active litigation. Holcomb added that he'll make a decision that he's "willing to defend."

House Enrolled Act 1338, constraining the state's public access chief: Holcomb said he would've preferred "more robust discussion" on the late-stage changes, but wasn't worried about "politicization" of the position. He said he hadn't made a final decision.

He wasn't asked about House Bill 1183, which limits "foreign adversary" land buys.

Police Notebook

INCIDENTS

City:

Wednesday, 2:04 p.m., Taco Bell. Driver cited for expired plates.

Wednesday, 2:40 p.m., Wells County Public Library. Caller reported juvenile was getting jumped by multiple other juveniles. Group asked to avoid each other and the library today.

Wednesday, 3:28 p.m., South Main and East Washington streets. Report of accident.

Wednesday, 5:10 p.m., Walmart. Caller reported four semi trucks parked in lot, they would prefer zero semi trucks.

Wednesday, 6:58 p.m., 204 Lamar Street. Report of someone looking in windows in middle of night, seen on camera. Woman seen on video but unable to be identified. Extra patrol ordered.

Thursday, 9:26 a.m., Billy Ann's Supper Pub. Report of truck pulling up and hitting building before taking off, corner of roof damages. Officer spoke to delivery driver at Lowes, investiga-

tion ongoing.

Thursday, 11:34 a.m., 700 block of Wiley Avenue. Report of food stamps fraud.

Thursday, 12:17 p.m., Taco Bell. Driver cited for distracted driving.

County:

Wednesday, 5:17 p.m., 6300 South 200 East, Bluffton. Report of theft of personal items.

Wednesday, 6:35 p.m., Bluffton High School. K9 Leo requested to assist with lost key fob from students playing around. No luck.

Wednesday, 7:08 p.m., 800 East 100 South, Bluffton. Caller reported her son's girlfriend drove her vehicle through the yard, tearing it up.

Wednesday, 7:51 p.m., 25 Lakeside Drive, Bluffton. Caller reported neighbor shooting at their dog and house with BB gun, possibly as a form of revenge for the dog chasing deer off of the neighbors property.

Thursday, 6:25 a.m., 1500 Lancaster Street, Bluffton. Warrant served to Lee Breedlove.

Ossian:

Thursday, 11:09 a.m., 5900 East 900 North, Ossian. Caller reported they may have left a burner on in house. Officer ensured no burner or appliances were on and the caller's home was safe.

FIRES

County:

Wednesday, 2:30 p.m., 7400 North Meridian Road, Uniondale. Report of a grass fire between pond and roadway, no buildings nearby. Fire knocked out approximately 25 minutes later.

ARRESTS

Lee Mack Breedlove, 33, Bluffton; Invasion of privacy, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,500.

ACCIDENTS

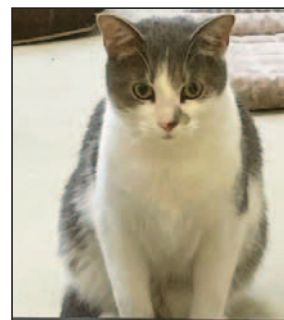
County:

Thursday, 7:22 a.m., S.R. 1 and 700 North. Deontae Eskridge, 17, Fort Wayne, was driving behind Anastasia L. Carrillo, 30, Ossian, and failed to brake in time. Eskridge's Hummer H3 collided with Carrillo's Chrysler Pacifica. Damages did not exceed \$2,500.

A Talk with Tego



Rugar is a three-year-old, Texas Heeler, neutered male.



Aeros is a two-year-old, domestic short hair, neutered male.



TJ is a two-year-old, calico female.



Tego

Tego's Tips: Walk, run, or have playtime with a dog 15 to 30 minutes daily.

These are just a few pets available for adoption at the Wells County Animal Shelter, 1613 W. Cherry St., Bluffton. For more information call 824-6063.

Severe storms rake Indiana and Kentucky, damaging structures

MADISON, Ind. (AP) — Severe storms with at least one suspected tornado raked southern Indiana and northern Kentucky on Thursday, damaging dozens of homes and leaving people without electricity, authorities said.

Storms damaged homes and trailers in the Ohio River communities of Hanover and Lamb in Indiana.

Jefferson County Sheriff Ben Flint said storms destroyed three or four single-family homes and four or five other structures and demolished several uninhabited campers along the river.

"We were fortunate that no one was injured," Flint told The Associated Press in a telephone interview.

Sgt. Stephen Wheelles of the Indiana State Police said a suspected tornado struck Jefferson County, damaging several homes and downing trees and power lines.

He posted photos on X, formerly known as Twitter, showing one home with its roof torn off and another missing roof shingles as well as an image of a baseball-sized hailstone.

Around 2,000 Duke Energy customers in Hanover lost power at one point during the storms, the company reported.

In Kentucky, Trimble County Emergency Management Director Andrew Stark said the storms damaged at least 50 structures,

including homes.

"We have a whole bunch of damage," Stark told the Courier Journal of Louisville.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear issued a statement saying a tornado touched down along the Indiana state border in Gallatin and Trimble counties and there were reports of a couple of minor injuries. He urged Kentuckians to stay aware of the weather as more storms were expected across the state Thursday evening and overnight.

"It does appear that there is some really significant damage, especially to the town of Milton in Trimble County," Beshear said. "We think there are over 100 structures that are potentially damaged."

The state's emergency operations center was activated to coordinate storm response, Beshear said.

Large pieces of hail also was reported in parts of the St. Louis area this afternoon.

There were unconfirmed reports of tornadoes in Jefferson County, Missouri, and Monroe County, Illinois, but no immediate reports of damage.

Severe weather was possible into Thursday night from northeast Texas to Indiana and Ohio, the National Weather Service said on X. It issued a tornado watch for parts of Arkansas, Illinois, Kansas and Missouri until 9 p.m. Central Daylight Time.

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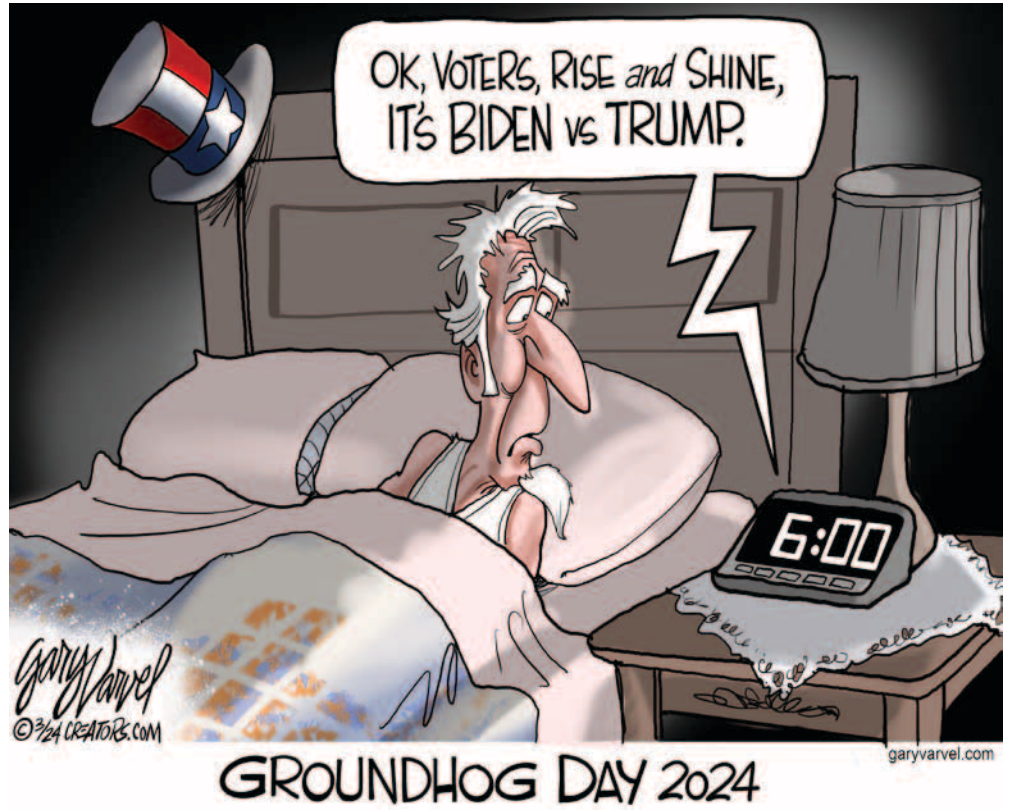
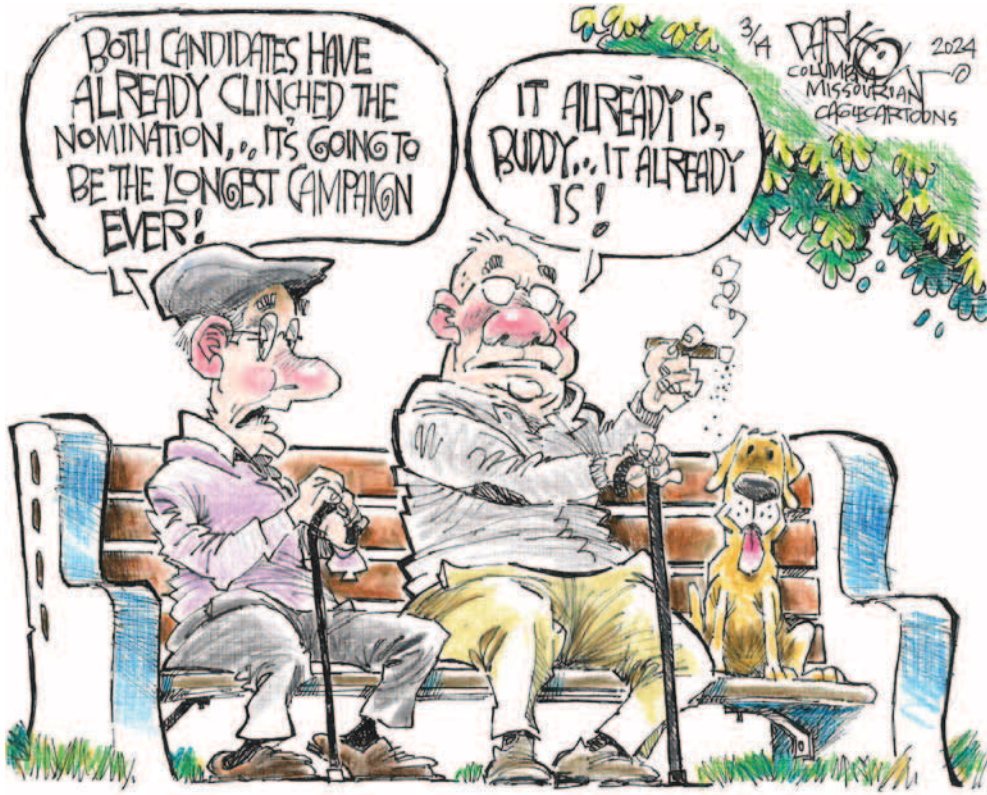
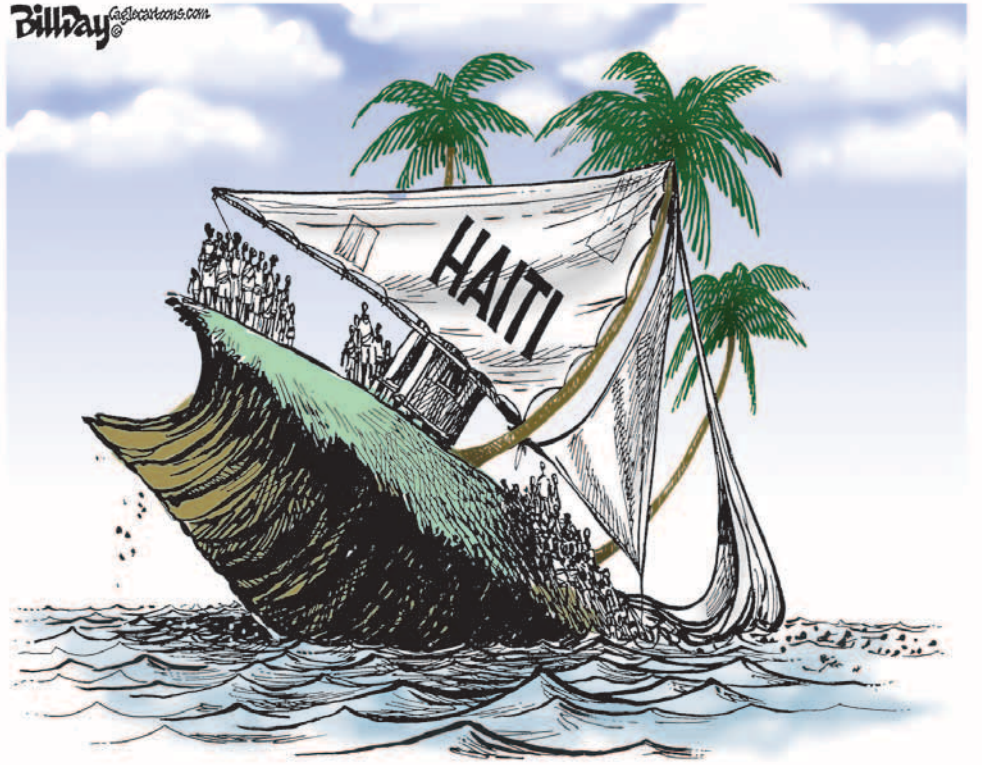
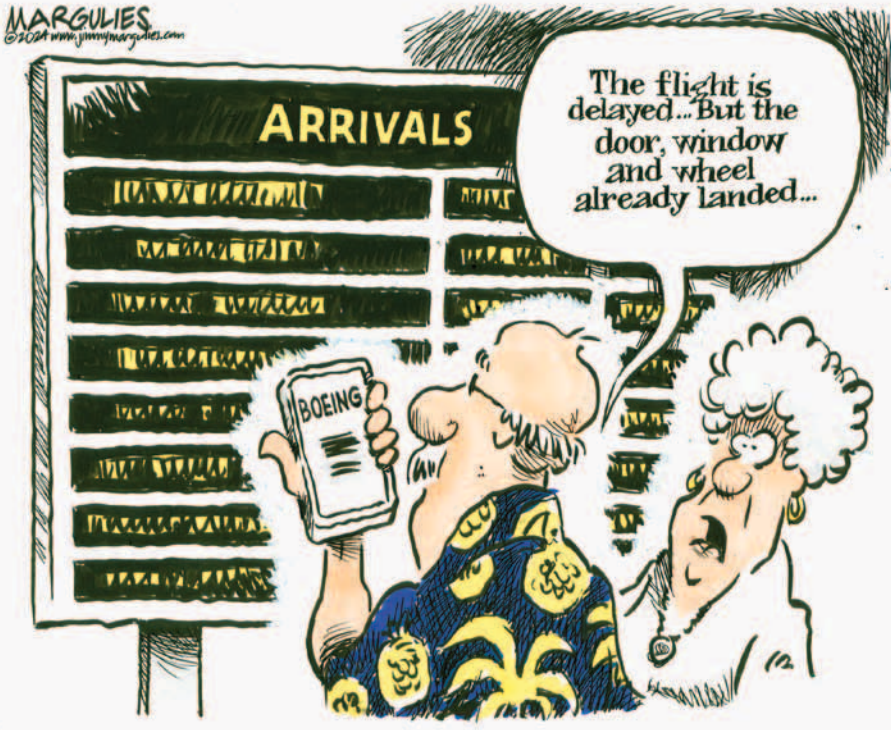
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The Week That Was - a look back through cartoonists' eyes...



Other Opinions

A tax exemption for supporting Hamas?

The United Nations has acknowledged that employees of its permanent refugee organization for Palestinians (Unrwa) supported Hamas and participated in the Oct. 7 terror attack on Israel. Should tax-exempt groups supporting Unrwa be held responsible for funding the atrocities?

That's the subject of a lawsuit that accuses a Washington, D.C.-based charity of providing material support for terrorism through its donations to Unrwa. Unrwa USA is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt charity that describes its mission as "support for the humanitarian work" of Unrwa through "fundraising, advocacy, and community engagement in the United States." The group is Unrwa's largest private donor, with \$3.8 million in donations in 2022 and \$5 million in 2021.

The lawsuit, filed Friday in Delaware federal court on behalf of Oct. 7 survivors, says the charity's work amounts to terrorist financing in violation of federal law. The plaintiffs say the 501(c)3 has been aware of Unrwa's connections with Hamas's terrorist activities and yet continued its donations. The suit says Unrwa USA knowingly "aids, abets and provides material support for those activities under the guise of humanitarian assistance."

In January, the U.S. and other countries announced they were pausing funding to Unrwa while allegations of employees' involvement on Oct. 7 are investigated. On Jan. 29, Unrwa USA said it was "horrified" by the allegations but that instead of pulling back on aid it would be "redoubling." On March 1 the group said it supports the investigation by the United Nations and would "resume financial support to UNRWA upon appropriate resolution."

Under the 2016 Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act, civil litigants are granted the "broadest possible basis" to seek relief against "persons, entities, and foreign countries" that have provided material support for terrorism, the lawsuit says. The evidence of participation by its employees in the Oct. 7 attacks suggests that Unrwa was deeply infiltrated by Hamas.

Unrwa USA describes itself as working "hand in hand" with Unrwa, and Unrwa's ties to Hamas have been public knowledge since long before Oct. 7. In 2004 then-Unrwa commissioner Peter Hansen said that he was "sure that there are Hamas members on the Unrwa payroll, and I don't see that as a crime."

Unrwa USA says on its website that educating Palestinian children is one of its priorities, but Unrwa's educational infrastructure in Gaza has been a locus of terrorist sympathizers. In a Telegram chat describing itself as an "interactive group for all education workers at the International Relief Agency 'Unrwa' - Gaza Region," participants celebrated the Oct. 7 massacre, according to U.N. Watch.

We reached out to Unrwa USA for comment but the communications director said she was "unable to address specifics" and shared the group's March 1 statement above.

The lawsuit isn't over tax status, but the Internal Revenue Service might also review the exemptions of 501(c)3 charities that are contributing to groups tied to terrorist activity. Someone in Congress might ask the IRS.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
Distributed by The Associated Press

Democrats losing their hold on California and California losing its hold on America

Last week's Super Tuesday results ensured the renominations of former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden, barring some unanticipated adverse health events. So, who's going to win in November?

Polls give us clues. Trump continues to have the small but persistent lead in public polls he has maintained since November 2023 — in contrast to the 2016 and 2020 cycles, in which he often trailed in national and target state polls.

But polls are only one indicator. Actual votes are another. And we've had one contest this year that provides important clues to the November vote: the California primary.

Primary voters in California, like those in Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, North Carolina and Texas, have voted not just for president but also for members of Congress and (in North Carolina) governor and statewide officials. Those contests may draw turnout from voters with little motivation to participate in seemingly already decided presidential primaries.

And California, unlike those states but like Louisiana and Washington, has, except at the presidential level, all-party primaries, in which the top two candidates, regardless of party, advance to the general election.

The results of all-party primaries in many but not all cases turn out to be good forecasts of the general election. For example, Washington state's 1994 results presaged the defeat of then-House Speaker Tom Foley and the first Republican majority in the U.S. House in 40 years.

It's true that this year's California primary came eight months before the November election, and in eight months, events can surprise and opinions can change. But today's polls are subject to the same caveat.

The big news from California is that, with 85% of the votes counted (high-tech California counts slowly), Democratic support is sagging a bit. With no viable opposition in the state to Biden or Trump, Democrats cast 59% of presidential votes and Republicans 39%. That's down from the state's 63%-34% margin for Biden over Trump in 2020.

Similarly, in the all-party primary for the U.S. Senate, Democrats got 59% of the votes and Republicans 39%. That's down from Sen. Alex Padilla's (D-Calif.) 61%-39% margin in 2022 and then-Sen. Dianne Feinstein's 63%-37% in the last Democratic-Republican runoff in 2012. It's nearly the same as Gov. Gavin Newsom's 59%-41% reelection in 2022 but weaker than his 62%-38% victory in 2018.

Those numbers don't mean difficulty for Biden in carrying California's 52 electoral votes or for Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), Congress's chief propagator of the Russia collusion hoax, in replacing Feinstein in the Senate.

But it does suggest gains for Republicans in con-

gressional and state legislative districts, and it does lend credence to polling data, reviewed last month in this space, showing Trump and Republican gains among Hispanic and Asian voters.

This year, Republicans won majorities in 13 districts to Democrats' 39, a vast improvement on the 46-7 Democratic margin in 2018 when, in reaction against Trump, Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) won back the House majority and the speaker's chair.

Republican incumbents in three heavily Hispanic and Asian seats who were elected with 51% in 2022 got between 55% and 56% of primary votes this year. And Republicans won between 43% and 49% of primary votes in nine other districts, seven of them heavily Hispanic. Most of those seats aren't seriously contested this year, but most may be in years to come.

As Republican pollster Patrick Ruffini argues in his book "Party of the People," non-college-educated Hispanic people, Asian people, and Black people with conservative views are voting increasingly

Republican, like non-college-educated white people.

California has seen something like this before. Over the last three generations, the state has been populated by two brief but enormous surges of migration of (to oversimplify) Midwesterners from 1946 to 1973 and Mexicans from 1982 to 2007. The Midwesterners provided majorities first for Pat Brown liberals and, after riots in Berkeley and Watts, for Ronald Reagan conservatives. Midwestern migrants enabled Republicans to hold the governorship in six of eight elections from 1966 to 1994.

Mexican voters entered the voting ranks more slowly. But in this century, they, together with liberal white college graduates in the San Francisco Bay Area and Westside of Los Angeles, have made once-marginal California solidly Democratic. Just as settled-in Midwesterners soured on liberals' 1960s policies, so settled-in Mexicans seem to be souring on this generation's liberal excesses.

Gentry liberals' high turnout will probably keep California Democratic, but Republican trending in lower-turnout Mexican areas will reduce their ranks in Congress well below Pelosi highs.

Meanwhile, California has been losing population, down 538,000 between 2020 and 2023, even as it lost one U.S. House seat in the reapportionment following the 2020 census. Migration from Mexico halted during the 2007-2008 housing crunch, and today's illegal immigrants are surging toward Texas, not California.

California bitterly clings to much of the high-tech and entertainment industries, but it seems to be losing its hold, in the days of Reagan, on the imaginations of most immigrants and Americans alike.



Michael Barone



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Learning it's ok to lean on others

Dear Annie: Please give me your opinion. I am an 84-year-old widow. I have one child, a son, and one grandchild in town. My other children live hours away. I no longer drive. I am financially independent and have someone to come clean twice a month, drive me to run errands, go to the doctor, do grocery shopping and take me to the beauty shop.

of love and service like this are exactly what family is for.

Dear Annie by Annie Lane



Dear Annie: This note is in regard to "Bummer Friend," who wrote in about her negative friend who lives alone, lost her leg and has limited ability to go out. It sounds like this woman could be severely depressed and could greatly benefit from professional counseling and perhaps antidepressants.

Depression can express itself in many forms, including anger, withdrawal and negativity. Also, asking the negative friend if she felt depressed might open an easier pathway to discuss her behavior and communication style and potential benefits of therapy.

Thank you from a loyal reader! — Another Idea

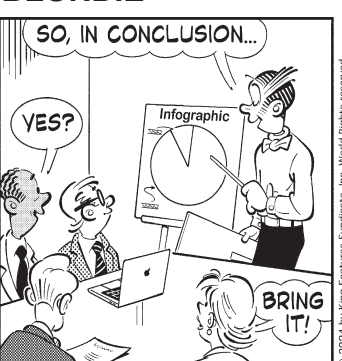
Dear Another Idea: Something like losing a leg can indeed trigger depression, and I appreciate you writing in to draw attention to that very likely possibility. It's also always helpful to come from a place of concern — such as inquiring about a loved one's health, whether it be mental or physical — rather than accusation when you hope to change someone's behavior. Thank you for writing in.

"How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology — featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation — is available as a paperback and e-book. Visit http://www.creatorspublishing.com for more information. Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com. © 2024 CREATORS.COM

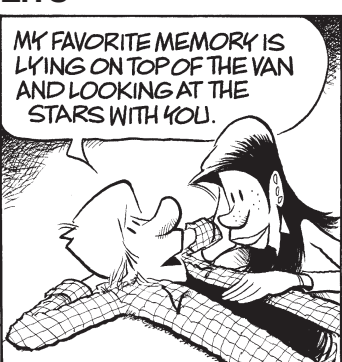
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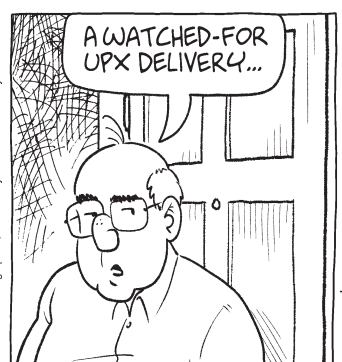
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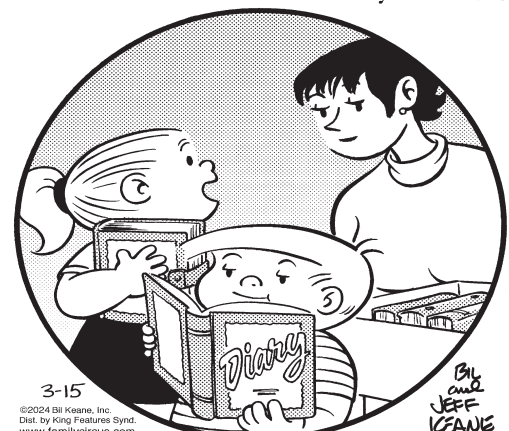


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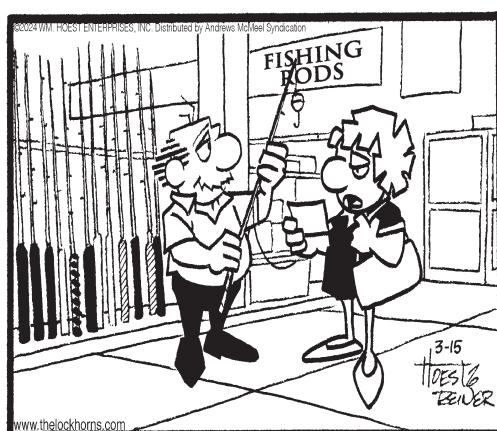


THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane



The LOCKHORNS



My Answer By Dr. Billy Graham



True Christianity is dependent on a personal relationship with God

Question: Americans are becoming more influenced by the notion that our Constitution is void of God and that there is no authority in the document. Aren't many Christians also casting doubt on the authority of God's Word? — S.R.

Answer: Many people who call themselves Christians actually doubt the authority of the Scriptures, believing in a god of their own imagination. Jesus Christ has been robbed of His deity. There are prominent preachers that suggest large passages of God's Word be eliminated. Beware! The truth of Jesus the Christ can be a disturbing thought. He did not come the first time to bring peace, though He will

return as the Prince of Peace. He came to show mankind our sin against Him. He came to take our place for the penalty of sin. What a Savior! Scripture warns that multitudes will reject that message, and we see that happening today. There is a cost to being a Christian and the cost for many is too great because they must forsake the lure of materialism and secular pleasure.

In this country, we are engaged in a debate on the separation of church and state. But there is a sense in which Christ cannot be separated from anything that pertains to life, for He "is all and in all" (Colossians 3:11, NKJV).

True Christianity is dependent on a personal relationship with God, not

on externals. No pagan philosophy, no atheistic ideology, no deep sorrow can dislodge the joy of living as a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is big enough to cope with the gigantic social problems of these times. Man does not in himself have the capacity to do this, but Christ provides all that we need to live in this sin-sick world with victory.

When someone repents of sin and receives Jesus as Savior, He gives newness of life — new direction, new strength, and a new dimension of living.

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

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes 'Yesterday's answer 3-15' and 'Solution time: 25 mins.'

TV schedule table with columns for time slots (5 PM to 12:30) and rows for various channels (WINM, CBS, Antenna, ABC, NBC, etc.) listing programs and their descriptions.

Continuation of the crossword puzzle grid from the previous block, showing the final rows of the puzzle.



Above, members of the Norwell boys' middle school swim team pose with the Northeast 8 Conference trophy they won Wednesday night at East Noble's YMCA. This was the Knights' sixth straight win of the NE8. (Photo provided)

Norwell boys win sixth straight NE8 conference swim crown

Norwell's boys' swim team followed in the girls' footsteps with a middle school swim and dive conference championship Wednesday night at East Noble's YMCA. Like the girls, the Knight boys crushed the competition to win their sixth straight Northeast 8 title, nearly eclipsing the 100-point margin of victory. Norwell finished with 375 team points, Huntington second at

277, Belmont third at 192, Indian Springs fourth at 136 and East Noble fifth with 113. As far as individual champions go, Norwell put through four of them. Ben Peterson won the diving and 50-yard butterfly events, Evan Swallow in the 200-yard freestyle and the 200-yard freestyle relay team of Wyatt Goulet, Tyler Zent, Swallow and Peterson.

High School Calendar

FRIDAY, MARCH 15
TRACK & FIELD (CO-ED): Bluffton, Norwell at Taylor University Qualifier, 5:30 p.m.
SATURDAY, MARCH 16
No events scheduled.
MONDAY, MARCH 18
No events scheduled.
TUESDAY, MARCH 19

No events scheduled.
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20
No events scheduled.
THURSDAY, MARCH 21
No events scheduled.
FRIDAY, MARCH 22
No events scheduled.
SATURDAY, MARCH 23
No events scheduled.

NFL considers rule changes that include challenges for penalties

By JOSH DUBOW
AP Pro Football Writer

The Indianapolis Colts are proposing a rule change that would allow coaches to challenge any penalty call for the first time. The NFL released a list of several rule change proposals on Wednesday made by teams that included an option to run a fourth-and-20 play in lieu of an onside kick, the moving of the trade deadline and giving teams an additional challenge if they are successful on one of their first two tries. The competition committee will make its own rule change proposals next week and owners are scheduled to vote on them at the league meetings later this month with 24 votes needed for approval. The most consequential change would allow for challenges of penalty calls by coaches, or replay officials in the last two minutes of the half, for a chance to correct egregious mistakes. Challenges would be limited only to penalties that were called on the field and could not impose a penalty when it wasn't called. Replay review is currently not used for most penalty calls outside of too many men on the field or whether a ball was touched before a pass interference penalty occurred. Replay is limited to aspects of a play such as whether a ball was caught or dropped, whether a player reached a first down or touchdown, whether a player fumbled before being down or whether a play was inbounds or out of bounds. The NFL had a one-year experiment making potential pass interference calls reviewable in 2019 after a bad no-call cost the New Orleans Saints during the NFC championship game against the Los Angeles Rams the previous season. The league dropped that after one year. The Lions also proposed giving a team a third challenge if one of its two first tries was successful. Currently teams only get a third challenge if they are successful on both of their first two attempts.

The Eagles once again brought up a proposal to alter onside kicks for end-of-game situations after only 5% of onside kicks in the fourth quarter were recovered by the kicking team, according to Sportradar. That's down from 18.8% as recently as 2017 as new rules for safety have made recovering onside kicks more difficult. The new proposal would allow a team trailing in the game to attempt a fourth-and-20 play from its own 20 following a touchdown or field goal instead of using a traditional onside kick. The team would keep the ball at the yard line gained following a conversion or give the receiving team the ball if it failed. Teams could still opt to use surprise onside kicks. Owners have voted down similar proposals with a fourth-and-15 option in recent years. Here are some of the other proposals: — The Steelers proposed moving the trade deadline back one week to the Tuesday following Week 9. Six other teams proposed moving it to the Tuesday following Week 10. — The Eagles proposed requiring scoreboard clocks to display tenths of seconds in the final minute of each half. — The Lions proposed eliminating the requirement that a player must be on the roster for at least one day following the cut-down to 53 players in order to be designated to return from injured reserve during the season. Detroit also proposed allowing teams in the postseason to designate any player to return from IR after missing four games even if a team has used its allotment of eight designated to return slots in the regular season. — The Bills proposed allowing a team to promote a third player each week from the practice squad to the active roster if that player is a "bona fide" quarterback and was designated as the emergency third QB for the game.

Lions extend the contracts of head coach Dan Campbell and general manager Brad Holmes

DETROIT (AP) — The Detroit Lions went generations searching for a general manager and coach to lead them to success. The franchise finally found what it was looking for three years ago, hiring general manager Brad Holmes and coach Dan Campbell, and it doesn't want to look for new leaders anytime soon. The Lions announced Thursday they have extended the contracts of Holmes and Campbell through the 2027 season. "They have been the driving force behind the rebuild of our football team and the success that we have enjoyed," Lions owner Sheila Ford Hamp said. "The continuity they provide for our football program will continue to be the key to our future success on the field." The club also said former Lions linebacker Chris Spielman, a key staffer behind the scenes, was retained with a multi-year extension as special assistant. Holmes joined the Lions prior to the start of the 2021 season and has been credited with rebuilding the roster. He drafted well, taking lineman Penei Sewell (2021),

receiver Amon-Ra St. Brown (2021), defensive lineman Aidan Hutchinson (2022), receiver Jameson Williams (2022), tight end Jack Campbell (2023), tight end Sam LaPorta (2023, 34th overall) and safety Brian Branch (2023). Holmes joined the Lions from the Los Angeles Rams, where he climbed the ranks to director of college scouting over his 18 years with the club. He was named NFL Executive of the Year for 2023 for building the Lions team that recorded a 12-5 record and reached the NFC championship game. Campbell joined the Lions six days after Holmes. In his first full-time head coaching stint, Campbell has a 24-26-1 record. The former tight end has led a significant turnaround after going 3-13-1 in his first season. Campbell led the Lions to their first NFC North title in 2023 as well as their first NFL playoff victory in 32 years. The Lions' appearance in the NFC championship game was the team's first since 1991, and Campbell was named an Associated Press Coach of the Year Finalist.

Holtmann hired to coach DePaul after being fired by Ohio State

By ANDREW SELIGMAN
AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — DePaul hired Chris Holtmann as its coach on Thursday, hoping he can restore a once-proud program that has struggled in recent decades. Holtmann wasn't out of work long after being fired by Ohio State in mid-February. The former Big East and Big Ten Coach of the Year faces a huge task taking over a team that just completed one of the worst seasons in league history. DePaul went 3-29 overall and became the first team to go 0-20 in Big East play. Former coach Tony Stubblefield was fired in January after two-plus seasons. "During this process, I was extremely impressed with the commitment, eagerness and vision of DeWayne Peevy and President (Robert) Manuel to build a successful BIG EAST basketball program," Holtmann said in a statement. "My wife, Lori, and our daughter, Nora, look forward to getting to Chicago and spending time in the DePaul community. We can't wait to get to work!" The 52-year-old Holtmann is 251-171 with seven NCAA Tournament appearances in 13 seasons at Gardner-Webb, Butler and Ohio State. He led the Bulldogs to the tour-

ney in each of his three years there and was widely viewed as a rising star in the coaching ranks when he took the job at Ohio State in 2017 after Thad Matta stepped down due to health reasons. Holtmann led the Buckeyes to a 137-86 record and four NCAA appearances. But they couldn't advance past the first weekend in 2021 and 2022. None of Holtmann's Ohio State teams won a Big Ten regular-season title or conference tournament. He also struggled in recent years trying to navigate the transfer portal and NIL issues. In 2022-23, Ohio State had its first losing season in nearly two decades, going 16-19 overall and 5-15 in the Big Ten. The Buckeyes were 14-11 and 4-10, having lost nine of 11, when Holtmann was fired. Ohio State had won five of six under Jake Diebler heading into Thursday's Big Ten Tournament game against Iowa. DePaul has lost 34 of 35 Big East games, counting the conference tournament. Stubblefield was 28-54 overall and 9-38 in the league. Holtmann is the second men's basketball coach hired by Peevy, who said DePaul conducted "extensive national search."



Red Bull employee who accused Horner of misconduct has been suspended

The Red Bull Racing Formula 1 employee whose complaint sparked an investigation into alleged misconduct by team principal Christian Horner has been suspended, a person with information on the matter told The Associated Press on Thursday. The person requested anonymity because Red Bull hasn't revealed details of the investigation. Red Bull Racing's parent company didn't immediately answer a request seeking comment. Last week, the team's parent company dismissed a complaint of alleged misconduct by Horner toward a team employee. At the time, the company said the employee had a right of appeal. Horner declined to comment on the suspension Thursday when he spoke at a news conference in Jeddah ahead of the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix this weekend. "I'm afraid I can't comment on anything that's confidential between an employee and the company, so I can't offer you anything on that," he said. A day after the complaint was dismissed, a file alleged to contain evidence against Horner was emailed to nearly 200 people in the F1 paddock, including Liberty Media, F1, the FIA, the other nine team principals and multiple media outlets. That occurred during practice for the Bahrain Grand Prix. The authenticity of the files has not been verified by the AP; the file came from a generic email account. Also Thursday, Horner expressed confidence that champion driver Max Verstappen would not leave Red Bull. That followed criticism of Horner from Verstappen's father, Jos, who warned last week the team would "explode" if Horner stayed in his post, in comments to The Daily Mail. Verstappen said Wednesday that his father was "not a liar," but the Dutch driver also indicated he had "no reason to leave" the team where he has won his three titles. Asked if Verstappen would see out his Red Bull contract, Horner said: "I'm certain that he will. He's got a great team around him, he's got great faith in that team and we've achieved an awful lot together, so he's committed to an agreement till 2028."

News-Banner Scoreboard

BASKETBALL		
High School		
Boys' Basketball		
IHSAA Semi-State Schedule		
4A North (Elkhart)		
Crown Point (20-5) vs. Fishers (26-1), 10 a.m.	Park Tudor (20-5) vs. Brownstown Central (25-4), 10 a.m.	St. John's 91, Seton Hall 72
Fort Wayne Wayne (22-3) vs. Mishawaka (20-7), 11:45 a.m.	Forest Park (18-9) vs. Parke Heritage (23-5), 11:45 p.m.	Providence 78, Creighton 73
Semi-State Championship at 7:30 p.m.	Championship at 7:30 p.m.	Big Ten
4A South (New Castle)	1A North (Michigan City)	Second Round
Center Grove (21-4) vs. Ben Davis (21-5), 10 a.m.	Liberty Christian (17-9) vs. Marquette Catholic (12-15), 10 a.m.	Michigan St. 77, Minnesota 67
Jessfersonville (19-7) vs. Lawrence North (25-3), 12 p.m.	Elkhart Christian (17-9) vs. Fort Wayne Canterbury (16-9), 12 p.m.	Wisconsin 87, Maryland 56
Championship at 8 p.m.	Championship at 7:30 p.m.	Ohio St. 90, Iowa 78
3A North (Logansport)	1A South (Washington)	Indiana 61, Penn St. 59
Peru (16-10) vs. South Bend Joseph (18-9), vs. South Bend Delta (22-6) vs. Fairfield (20-6), 12 p.m.	Greenwood Christian (18-7) vs. Bethesda Christian (21-7), 10 a.m.	Mid-American
Championship at 8 p.m.	Evansville Christian (24-2) vs. Barr-Reeve (24-2), 11:45 p.m.	Quarterfinal
3A South (Seymour)	Championship at 7:30 p.m.	Kent St. 67, Toledo 59
Guerin Catholic (21-7) vs. Danville Community (22-3), 10 a.m.	College	Bowling Green 66, Cent. Michigan 56
Evansville Bosse (15-10) vs. Scottsburg (22-5), 12 p.m.	Men's Basketball Scores	Akron 75, Miami (Ohio) 63
Championship at 8 p.m.	College Basketball Scores	Ohio 82, W. Michigan 55
2A North (Lafayette Jefferson)	Thursday, Mar. 14	Mountain-West Conference
North Judson-San Pierre (21-6) vs. Wapahani (24-2), 10 a.m.	TOURNAMENT	Quarterfinal
Wabash (21-5) vs. Fort Wayne Blackhawk Christian (21-6), 12 p.m.	Atlantic Coast	Utah St. 87, Fresno St. 75, OT
Championship at 8 p.m.	Big 12	San Diego St. 74, UNLV 71, UT
2A South (Southport)	Big East	Pacific-12 Conference
	Quarterfinal	Arizona 70, Southern Cal 49
	Texas Tech 81, BYU 67	Oregon 68, UCLA 66
	Houston 60, TCU 45	Southeastern
	Iowa St. 76, Kansas St. 57	Second Round
	Missouri Valley	Mississippi St. 70, LSU 60
	Quarterfinal	South Carolina 80, Arkansas 66
	UCConn 87, Xavier 60	Texas A&M 80, Mississippi 71
		Women's Basketball Scores
		Thursday, Mar. 14
		TOURNAMENT
		Missouri Valley
		First Round
		Indiana St. 66, S. Illinois 54
		Illinois St. 85, Evansville 64
		Ill. Chicago 79, Valparaiso 77

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		8	1					5
9				6			5	7
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			2	7				8

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Difficulty: ★★★★★

3/15

EMPLOYMENT

Help Wanted

THE WELLS COUNTY Prosecutor's Office is looking to hire a person for an Investigator position. The position is a part-time county-paid position making \$21/hour. The investigator would be responsible for conducting criminal investigations and assisting the Prosecutor in preparing cases for trial. The investigator must be an effective communicator, be proficient with a computer, be able to work independently, and have the ability to be on 24-hour call for assistance at crime scenes. Interested persons should go to wellscounty.org/prosecutor/ for a more detailed description of this position. Send any resumes to the Wells County Prosecutor's Office, 102 West Market Street, Suite 405, Bluffton, IN 46714 or submit them by email to prosecutor@wellscounty.org.

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.

HELOISE HINT: Want to switch careers? This might be a great time to do it. Check out trends in the marketplace to see where your skills will fit best. Go online and research the industry that you're interested in for more information. Email HELOISE@Heloise.com.

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Lottery Numbers

Thursday's Drawings HOOSIER LOTTERY
Cash 5 — 07-08-15-21-42
Cash4Life — 07-12-14-50-52, Cash Ball: 03
Quick Draw Midday — 02-04-08-10-12-16-19-22-34-37-42-48-49-51-54-56-63-64-74-75, BE: 49
Daily Three-Midday — 06-00-04, SB: 01
Daily Three-Evening — 06-05-04, SB: 07
Daily Four-Midday — 01-01-07-07, SB: 01
Daily Four-Evening — 05-09-07-00, SB: 07
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By virtue of a certified copy of a decree to me directed from the Clerk of Wells Superior Court of Wells County, Indiana, in Cause No.: 90C01-2308-MF-000016, wherein PennyMac Loan Services, LLC, was Plaintiff, and Nathan T. Nusbaumer, Nichole S. Nusbaumer, was/were Defendant(s), requiring me to make the sum as provided for in said Decree with interest and cost, I will expose at public sale to the highest bidder, on the 10th day of April, 2024, at the hour of 1:00PM or as soon thereafter as is possible, at 1525 E. Corning Road, Bluffton, IN 46714, the fee simple of the whole body of Real Estate in Wells County, Indiana.
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Public Sale Calendar

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, *Schrader Auction Co.*

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. Preview: March 21, March 28 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 816 S. 11th Street, Decatur, IN. *The Steffen Group Inc.*, www.steffengrp.com, 260-824-3006.

BIDDING STARTS CLOSING APRIL 4 STARTING AT 6 p.m. EST - Joann Groves, Anita Miller & Veda Ewart POA, owner. 6 p.m.: 2,132 sf, 4 bedroom, 1 bath, partial basement, 2-car attached garage, sitting on .4 acre city lot, South Adams Community School, Wabash Township, Adams County. 6:30 p.m.: Furniture, household items, cast iron pans, lots of collectibles, dishes, Zippo lighters & more! Preview March 25, 5-6 p.m., 230 High Street, Geneva. Pick up April 5, 1-5 p.m. *Krueckberg Auction & Realty LLC*, 260-724-7402, kjauction.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.

APRIL 9 - 6 p.m. - Michael & Shelley Mossburg, owners. Wells County Chamber of Commerce, 211 Water Street, Bluffton. Commercial real estate & land auction. Seven tracts to be sold in individual tracts or any combinations. Open house March 26, 5-6 p.m. or by appointment, 1600 W. Washington St., Bluffton. *Krueckberg Auction & Realty LLC*, 260-724-7402, kjauction.com.

Judge rejects bid by Trump to throw out classified documents case

By ERIC TUCKER,
ALANNA DURKIN RICHER
and TERRY SPENCER
Associated Press

FORT PIERCE, Fla. (AP) — A federal judge on Thursday rejected one bid by Donald Trump to throw out his classified documents criminal case, and appeared skeptical during hours of arguments of a separate effort to scuttle the prosecution ahead of trial.

U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon issued a two-page order saying that though the Trump team had raised “various arguments warranting serious consideration,” a dismissal of charges was not merited. The case involves boxes of records, some highly classified, that Trump took to his Mar-a-Lago estate when he left the White House.

Cannon, who was appointed to the bench by the former president, had made clear during more than three-and-a-half hours of arguments that she was reluctant to dismiss one of the four criminal cases against the 2024 presumptive Republican presidential nominee. She said at one point that a dismissal of the indictment would be “difficult to see” and that it would be “quite an extraordinary” step to strike down an Espionage Act statute that underpins the bulk of the felony counts against Trump but that his lawyers contend is constitutionally vague.

The ruling from Cannon is a modest win for special counsel Jack Smith’s team, which in addition to the classified documents case is pursuing a separate prosecution of Trump on charges that he plotted to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.

But it left unanswered questions over when the case might proceed to trial and only covered one of the two motions argued in court on Thursday. A separate motion about whether Trump was permitted under the Presidential Records

Act to retain the documents after he left the White House remains pending, but the judge also seemed disinclined to throw out the case on those grounds.

“It’s difficult to see how this gets you to the dismissal of an indictment,” she told a Trump lawyer.

Trump attended Thursday’s arguments, listening intently with his hands sometimes clasped in front of him on the defense table as his attorneys pressed Cannon to throw out the case.

The hearing was the second this month in the case in Florida, which has unfolded slowly in the courts since prosecutors first brought charges last June. Cannon heard arguments on March 1 on when to schedule a new trial date — it was initially set for May 20 — but has yet to announce one and gave no indication Thursday on when she might do so. Prosecutors have pressed the judge to set a date for this summer. Trump’s lawyers are hoping to put it off until after the election.

After the hearing, Trump on his Truth Social platform took note of the “big crowds” outside the courthouse, which included supporters with flags and signs who honked their car horns in solidarity with the ex-president. He again said the prosecution is a “witch hunt” inspired by President Joe Biden.

Some of Thursday’s arguments centered on the 1978 statute known as the Presidential Records Act. The law requires presidential documents to be turned over to the National Archives and Records Administration, though former presidents may retain notes and papers created for purely personal reasons.

His lawyers say the act entitled him to designate as personal property the records he took with him to Mar-a-Lago in Florida and that he was free to do with the documents as he pleased.

“He had original classification authority,” said defense lawyer Todd Blanche. “He had the authority to do whatever he thought was appropriate with his records.”

Prosecutors countered that those records were clearly presidential, not personal, and included top-secret information and documents related to nuclear programs and the military capabilities of the U.S. and foreign countries. They say the presidential records statute was never meant to permit presidents to retain classified and top-secret documents, like those kept at Mar-a-Lago.

“The documents charged in the indictment are not personal records, period. They are not,” Harbach said. “They are nowhere close to it under the definition of the Presidential Records Act.”

Trump’s lawyers separately challenged as overly vague a statute that makes it a crime to have unauthorized retention of national defense information, a charge that forms the basis of 32 of the 40 felony counts against Trump in the case.

Defense lawyer Emil Bove said ambiguity in the statute permits what he called “selective” enforcement by the Justice Department, leading to Trump being charged but enabling others to avoid prosecution. Bove suggested a recent report by special counsel Robert Hur that criticized President Joe Biden’s handling of classified information did not recommend charges proved his point about the lack of clarity.

When a law is unclear, Bove told Cannon, “The court’s obligation is to strike the statute and say ‘Congress, get it right.’”

Jay Bratt, another prosecutor with Smith’s team, disputed that there was anything unclear about the law, and Cannon pointedly noted that striking down a statute would be “quite an extraordinary step.”

Prosecutors say they’re open to delaying Trump’s hush-money trial for a month

NEW YORK (AP) — New York prosecutors said Thursday they are open to delaying the start of Donald Trump’s hush-money criminal trial by a month “in an abundance of caution” to give the former president’s lawyers time to review evidence they only recently obtained from a previous federal investigation into the matter.

The Manhattan district attorney’s office said in a court filing that it does not oppose adjourning the trial for 30 days but would fight the defense’s push for a longer delay. Judge Juan Manuel Merchan did not immediately rule.

Jury selection is scheduled for March 25. The hush-money case is one of four criminal indictments against Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee.

Trump’s legal team said it has received tens of thousands of pages of evidence from the U.S. attorney’s office in Manhattan in the last two weeks, including records about former Trump lawyer-turned-prosecution witness Michael Cohen that are “exculpatory and favorable to the defense.” Prosecutors said most of the newly turned over material is “largely irrelevant to the subject matter of this case,” though some records are pertinent.

Trump’s lawyers want a 90-day delay, but they’ve also asked Merchan to dismiss the case entirely, alleging the last-minute disclosures amounted to prosecutorial misconduct and violated rules governing the sharing of evidence. That process, called discovery, is routine in criminal cases and is intended to help ensure a fair trial.

Prosecutors contend Trump’s lawyers caused the problem by waiting until Jan. 18 to subpoena the U.S. attorney’s office for the full case file — a mere nine weeks before the scheduled start of jury selection.

District Attorney Alvin Bragg’s office said it requested the full file last year, but the U.S. attorney’s office only turned over a subset of records. Trump’s lawyers received that material last June and had ample time to seek additional evidence from the federal probe, the D.A.’s office said.

Short trial delays because of issues with evidence aren’t unusual, but any delay in a case involving Trump would be significant, with trial dates in his other criminal cases up in the air and Election Day less than eight months away.

The defense has also sought to delay the trial until after the Supreme Court rules on Trump’s presidential immunity claims, which his lawyers say could apply to some of the allegations and evidence in the hush-money case. The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear oral arguments April 25.

James Crumbley, who bought gun used to kill 4 students, found guilty

By ED WHITE, Associated Press

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — The father of a Michigan school shooter was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter Thursday, a second conviction against the teen’s parents who were accused of failing to secure a gun at home and doing nothing to address acute signs of his mental turmoil.

The jury verdict means James Crumbley has joined Jennifer Crumbley as a cause of the killing of four students at Oxford High School in 2021, even without pulling the trigger.

They had separate trials as the first U.S. parents to be charged in a mass school shooting committed by their child. Jennifer Crumbley was convicted of involuntary manslaughter in February.

The verdicts — one each for the four victims — were read around 7:15 p.m. at the end of a full day of deliberations.

James Crumbley, who heard the outcome through headphones worn throughout the trial because of a hearing problem, shook his head from side to side as the jury

foreman said “guilty.”

Family of some of the fallen students wept quietly and gripped each other’s hands in the second row of the courtroom gallery.

“I know this verdict will not bring them back,” prosecutor Karen McDonald said, “but I hope it will serve as an example of the importance of holding those who enable gun violence accountable.”

Defense attorney Mariell Lehman said James Crumbley “obviously feels terrible” about what happened at the school. He faces a possible minimum sentence of as much as 10 years in prison.

“While we are disappointed with the verdict, we know that the jury had a very difficult task in front of them,” Lehman told The Associated Press.

Prosecutors focused on two key themes at the trial: the parents’ response to a morbid drawing on Ethan Crumbley’s math assignment a few hours before the shooting, and the teen’s access to a Sig Sauer 9 mm handgun purchased by James Crumbley only four days earlier.

Ethan made a ghastly draw-

ing of a gun and a wounded man on a math assignment and added disturbing phrases. “The thoughts won’t stop. Help me. My life is useless.”

But James and Jennifer Crumbley declined to take Ethan home following a brief meeting at the school, and staff didn’t demand it. A counselor, concerned about suicidal ideations, told them to seek help for the boy within 48 hours.

Ethan had told Shawn Hopkins that he was sad over the death of his dog and grandmother and the loss of a friend who had abruptly moved away. He said the drawing was simply his jottings for a video game and that he wasn’t planning to commit violence.

Neither he, nor his parents, told school officials about the gun they had just bought, according to trial testimony.

Hopkins had hoped Ethan would spend the day with his parents. But when that was ruled out, the counselor felt the teen would probably be safer around others at school.

Ethan later pulled the Sig Sauer

from his backpack and began shooting that same day, killing Justin Shilling, 17; Madisyn Baldwin, 17; Hana St. Juliana, 14; and Tate Myre, 16. No one had checked the bag, though a school administrator had joked about its heaviness.

“James Crumbley is not on trial for what his son did,” McDonald told the jury Wednesday. “James Crumbley is on trial for what he did and for what he didn’t do.”

He “doesn’t get a pass because somebody else” actually pulled the trigger, she said.

Hopkins told the jury that James Crumbley showed empathy toward his son during the meeting about the drawing, but took no additional action.

When James Crumbley heard about the shooting, he rushed home from his DoorDash job and looked for the gun.

“I think my son took the gun,” he said in a frantic 911 call.

Investigators found an empty gun case and empty ammunition box on the parents’ bed. A cable that could have locked the gun was still in a package, unopened.

Ethan told a judge when he pleaded guilty to murder and terrorism that the gun was not locked when he stuffed it in his backpack before school.

Lehman tried to emphasize that James Crumbley did not consent to any gun access by his son.

“He did not know he had to protect others from his son,” she told jurors. “He did not know that it was reasonably foreseeable that his son would commit these offenses. He had no idea what his son was planning to do.”

There was no testimony from experts about Ethan’s mental health, and no records were introduced. The boy’s lawyers said before trial that he would invoke his right to remain silent if called to testify.

But the judge allowed the jury to see excerpts from the teen’s handwritten journal.

“I have zero help for my mental problems and it’s causing me to shoot up the ... school,” Ethan wrote. “I want help but my parents don’t listen to me so I can’t get any help.”

President Biden opposes plan to sell U.S. Steel company to Japanese firm

By JOSH BOAK

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden came out in opposition to the planned sale of U.S. Steel to Nippon Steel of Japan, saying on Thursday that the U.S. needs to “maintain strong American steel companies powered by American steel workers.”

In a statement, Biden added: “U.S. Steel has been an iconic American steel company for more than a century, and it is vital for it to remain an American steel company that is domestically owned and operated.”

By opposing the merger, Biden has chosen to support unionized workers in a critical election year at the risk of upsetting the business community and an essential ally in Japan. Thursday’s announcement, coming as Biden is campaigning in the Midwest, could have ripples in his race against the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, Donald Trump.

The Democratic president has made the restoration of American manufacturing a cornerstone of his agenda as he seeks reelection, and he has the endorsements of the AFL-CIO and several other prominent unions. The White House said Thursday that Biden called David McCall, president of United Steelworkers, to reiterate his support for its members.

Nippon Steel announced in December that it planned to buy the Pittsburgh-based steel producer for \$14.1 billion in cash, raising concerns about what the transaction could mean for unionized workers, supply chains and U.S. national security.

The Japanese company has tried to assuage critics by promising no job losses due to the merger. It also committed to keeping the U.S. Steel name and Pittsburgh headquarters, while noting it already has a presence in the American market and would bring in new resources to foster job growth.

The company, which is the world’s fourth largest steel producer, launched a website with supportive statements from Larry Summers, the former treasury secretary, and Pat Toomey, a Republican and former senator from Pennsylvania.

Shortly after the steel deal was announced, the White House indicated it would be under review by the secretive Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States. The government does not officially provide updates on the CFIUS review process.

Biden has a big megaphone to weigh in on the matter, but he is not intervening in the review process or formally blocking the deal, according to a person familiar with deliberations

who insisted on anonymity to discuss the situation.

When asked about the deal on Thursday, White House national security spokesman John Kirby declined to say if the president wanted to stop it outright or would be amenable to changes in its structure. But Kirby told reporters that the United States sees its alliance with Japan as “stronger than it’s ever been.”

Still, the president holds sway over CFIUS. The treasury secretary leads the committee, which is also composed of the heads of federal agencies and, as deemed appropriate, directors of White House councils on the economy and national security.

Trump said earlier this year after meeting with the Teamsters union that he would stop the U.S. Steel acquisition: “I would block it. I think it’s a horrible thing, when Japan buys U.S. Steel. I would block it instantaneously.”

Biden traveled Thursday to Saginaw, Michigan, which was once home to multiple General Motors plants and where he hopes his backing from union workers can resonate with voters.

The city is in a swing county that narrowly backed Trump in 2016 and then flipped to Biden in 2020, making it a crucial contest in

this year’s presidential race.

Biden has a close relationship with the United Steelworkers. He gave the union members “personal assurances” that he has their backs, according to a February statement by the union about Nippon Steel’s plans. U.S. Steel is headquartered in Pennsylvania, another key

state in this year’s election.

The United Steelworkers issued a statement last week after meeting with representatives from Nippon Steel that it had concerns about whether the company would honor existing labor agreements and about the company’s financial transparency, adding that there were “bar-

riers” to closing a merger.

The U.S. considers Japan to be one of its closest allies and a key partner in countering China’s ambitions and influence in Asia. Biden has visited the country twice as president and will host Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the White House on April 10.

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