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TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2024

BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection

\$1.00

## Two teens die in 3-vehicle crashes near Uniondale

By HOLLY GASKILL and SYDNEY KENT

Two Wells County teens, including a Norwell High School sophomore, were pronounced dead at the scene of an accident Sunday evening.

According to a press release from the Wells County Sheriff's Department, the accident involved a dirt bike, ATV and passenger vehicle on Wells County Road 100 West in the area north of State Road 116 in Uniondale just after 8 p.m.

A witness told officers that the bike had attempted to move into the southbound lane for oncoming traffic but lost control due to road conditions. The bike fell on its side and slid in front of a passenger vehicle, which then ran over the bike and its driver, Keaton Osmun, 17, rural Ossian.

At the same time, an ATV veered off the roadway on the west side, striking a utility pole. Driver Lillyian Ellenberger, 19, rural Ossian, was ejected.

Osmun and Ellenberger were

found unresponsive at the scene. According to the WCSO, life-saving efforts were attempted, but both were pronounced dead at the scene.

The press release noted that both individuals were wearing helmets.

According to the dispatch log, the driver of the vehicle, Krysta Graft, 23, rural Ossian, was transported to Bluffton Regional Medical Center for a blood draw. That is required in fatal accidents.

No arrests have been made at

this time, and the investigation is ongoing.

Just over a year ago, Osmun had been seriously injured after he and Kaylee Heckber, 18, Ossian, were in a vehicle that was T-boned on Adams County Road 700 West at the intersection of Ind. 124. At the time, both were transported to Lutheran Hospital and ultimately recovered.

The driver in the 2023 accident, Christen Gerber, 42, Bluffton, was charged with Level 4 and Level 5 felonies for causing catastrophic

injury with a vehicle while intoxicated. The case was set for a jury trial last August, but Adams County Prosecutor Jeremy Brown said the trial has been delayed as the prosecution determines whether the Level 4 felony, accounting for long-standing injuries, is applicable.

A pre-trial conference is scheduled for April 15, where Brown expects to know if the case will go to trial or if a plea deal will be met.

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## Commissioners delay vote on solar project

Discussion draws large crowd

By HOLLY GASKILL

Following overwhelming public turnout and feedback on the matter, the Wells County Commissioners unanimously delayed a decision for a zoning request from Paddlefish Solar, a solar development planning to settle in parts of Liberty and Chester townships.

Visual boundary lines were drawn with the audience of the commissioners' meeting Monday night, where nearly 100 people were in attendance. The meeting was held at the Wells County Community Center at the 4-H Fairgrounds in anticipation of a large turnout.

The Wells County Area Plan Commission gave a unanimous "do not pass" recommendation at their hearing on March 7. Paddlefish Solar requested to overlay 49 parcels of agriculturally zoned land with a P-1 district for energy development.

Despite the large attendance at the time, only one person spoke in favor of the development.

"It's been an interesting week," Commissioner Jeff Stringer said. "I think I

received 12 comments about the whole system. Since the Area Planning Commission (hearing), I can't even count how many I've got — at least 12 to 15 a day, if not more than that, both for and against."

Commissioners Mike Vanover and Blake Gerber affirmed that sentiment.

The commissioners can override the APC's ruling and grant the zoning overlay, should they choose to. They have 90 days to decide on the matter or it is automatically rejected.

The commissioners did not provide a timeline for their decision.

"I think we have to do our due diligence," Gerber said. "My motto has always been 'do it once and do it right.' And that means I'm not ready to jump on the bandwagon tonight and go down a path."

Stringer further noted how much more support the solar project received Monday, where its representation had not been clear at the March 7 hearing. Stringer was one of about a dozen people who spoke against the request at the APC hearing.

Of the over 30 individu-



Nearly 100 people attended the Wells County Commissioner meeting, which was held at the 4-H Fairgrounds to accommodate the expected crowd. Pictured is the front half of audience, many of whom wore Paddlefish Solar hats. (Photo by Sydney Kent)

als who spoke during public comment Monday, 17 supported the solar development.

Many of those in favor sat in the front rows, often donning bright green and white branded hats. Those opposing the request followed in the rows behind, with a handful standing in the back. Each person's endorsements or arguments against were often met with applause or hollers from their coordinating group, as well as the occasional heckle from the opposition.

Their arguments often fell into similar overlaps — the potential financial benefits or costs, property rights and values, and the future of Wells County.

"The differences in this room cannot be overcome — one side will lose, and one side will win," said Brandon Hamish, a member of the Wells County Council.

In their March 7 decision, members of the APC said that the solar development appeared incongruent with the established Wells County Vision 2035 Plan, which emphasizes the preservation of an agricultural community.

However, this was disputed by several members of the public, who argued that solar farm represents a new definition of an agricultural community.

"I'm here because I believe solar is an opportunity, that we can provide

economic stability as we continue our agricultural heritage and lifestyle both presently and for generations yet to come," said Claudia Mounsey, representing Mounsey Family Farms, which has signed onto the development. "Agriculture is the backbone of our county's economy and heritage, and it's essential to preserve our agricultural resources for future generations. However, I believe that we can find a balance between agricultural productivity and solar energy development."

"This emerging technology is a natural resource," said Brad Poper of Bluffton. "The Comprehensive Plan mentions natural resources, and all they're looking to

do is farm a modern, new, emerging technology naturally. So they're not changing anything, they're just future farmers."

However, APC board member John Schuhmacher of Zanesville maintained his position.

"I like to flip on the light switch and have power, but I also like to eat, alright?" Schuhmacher. "My proposal is that if we're going to have solar panels, put them on areas that have limited agricultural value."

Multiple residents further mentioned the agricultural productivity of the farm area, including Bluffton real estate agent Jody Holloway.

"I'm not opposed to solar energy, but there's a place (Continued on Page 2)

## County has new health officer, effective today

By HOLLY GASKILL

The Wells County Commissioners have confirmed the appointment of Dr. Brandon Huggins as local health officer.

Huggins has assumed the role previously held by Dr. Kay Johnson effective immediately. Johnson will remain as a consultant to the board as needed.

The Board of Health unanimously

appointed Huggins in a special session on March 11. He is an orthopedic spine surgeon with the Lutheran Health Network, including Bluffton Regional Medical Center. He graduated from Norwell High School and received his medical degree from Indiana University.

"He's energetic, he's a quick learner," said board president Chris Ester-

ling during Monday's commissioner meeting. "When we interviewed him, we just saw his desire to help the county he grew up in. We're excited that he came to us."

Commissioner Jeff Stringer expressed a similarly positive outlook while recognizing the extensive turnover within the Health Department in the last year. Since May 2023, only

one full-time position has not been vacant. The board is also full for the first time in several years.

However, the moment was not without a call to action. Stringer noted the impending deadline of Health First Indiana, a public health funding program. Stringer said he received a skeleton proposal but wanted a "compre-

(Continued on Page 2)



Dr. Brandon Huggins

## City street improvements are set for immediate start

By JONATHAN SNYDER

Bluffton Street Commissioner Tim Simpson said Monday that construction season will start Tuesday on Silver, Horton, and Townsley streets.

A \$2 million Community Crossings grant will see various roads receive ramp upgrades to make them compliant with the Americans for Disabilities Act.

Milling and filling work will also be done.

Simpson estimated the project that starts today will take more than two months to complete. Concrete demolition will be first on the agenda for the workers, with milling and filing work coming later as some hot mix plants are not open until April.

The following is a list of all areas where construction work will happen over the year.

- Wiley Avenue from Main to Bond
- Johnson Street from Wiley to Cherry
- Ridge Place
- Cherry Street from Mullberry to Wayne
- Monroe Street from Main to

- Fieldcrest
- Jersey Street from Washington to Silver
- Wabash Street from the railroad tracks to Johnson
- Wabash Street from Main to E Market
- Bond Street from South to Lancaster
- Townley Street from Bennett to Wayne

- Horton Street from Scott to Wayne
- East Silver Street from Main to Wayne
- West Silver Street from Main to Clark
- Scott Street from Cherry to Wabash
- William Wells Circle from Madison to Stony Creek

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### Outside



Temperatures in the 50s today, but not tomorrow

Today	Wed.	Thursday
High 51	High 41	High 40
Low 32	Low 22	Low 28

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# Commissioners

(Continued from Page 1)

for it, and covering prime farm ground with solar panels is not the place for it," Holloway said. "Put it on top of the landfill, put it in (a) floodplain area — it should not be covered on prime farm ground, as good as ground as there is in that township."

Ken Jones of Marion maintained that the matter was about the rights of property owners. "When you do cast your vote, it's not just about the solar project, it's about the individual rights of the landowners," he added.

Harnish later recognized this, noting that arguments about property rights could be made for or against the matter. However, he took issue with the company itself — Paddlefish Solar is

partially owned by EDF Renewables, a subsidiary of the French state-owned *Electricité de France*.

Dale Gearheart of Poneto also highlighted that a portion of those present in support of Paddlefish Solar were from outside of Wells County.

"This decision is not an ideological one, but a political one," Harnish said. "It isn't about principle. It's about power, and whether or not you're willing to use your power to defend your county and your people against a foreign government-backed green energy project. And that is my one request. That's what I'm asking you to do. Defend your people."

Todd Fiechter, a Southern Wells school board member, spoke neither in favor nor against but again affirmed a

statement the district has echoed from the beginning — the schools should be considered in any decision.

As public comment closed, Stringer posed final questions to Jesse Laniak, project developer, about the project's government subsidies. Laniak stated Paddlefish would receive the locally approved 10-year total tax abatement and a federal tax credit, both of which he believed were necessary to the solar development's start.

"We take this seriously, this is something we don't take lightly," Stringer concluded. "This is one that could divide the county, and we're trying not to do that."

The commissioners are scheduled to meet next at 5 p.m. Monday, April 1.

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# Israeli envoys coming to Washington for discussion

By **AAMER MADHANI, ZEKE MILLER and JULIA FRANKEL** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday agreed to send a team of Israeli officials to Washington to discuss with Biden administration officials a prospective Rafah operation as each side is looking to make "clear to the other its perspective," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said.

The agreement to hold talks about Rafah came as Biden and Netanyahu spoke Monday, their first interaction in more than a month, as the divide has grown between allies over the food crisis in Gaza and Israel's conduct during the war, according to the White House. Sullivan said the talks will happen in the coming days and are expected to involve military, intelligence and humanitarian experts.

The White House has been skeptical of Netanyahu's plan to carry out an operation in the southern city of Rafah, where about 1.5 million displaced Palestinians are sheltering, as Israel looks to eliminate Hamas following the militant group's deadly Oct. 7 attack.

Sullivan said Biden in the call once again urged Netanyahu not to carry out a Rafah operation. At the coming talks, he said U.S. officials will lay out "an alternative approach that would target key Hamas elements in Rafah and secure the Egypt-Gaza border without a major ground invasion."

"The president has rejected, and did again today, the straw man that raising questions about Rafah is the same as raising questions about defeating Hamas," Sullivan said. "That's just nonsense. Our position is that Hamas should not be allowed a safe haven in Rafah or anywhere else, but a major ground operation there would be a mistake. It would lead to more innocent civilian deaths, worsen the already dire humanitarian crisis, deepen the anarchy in Gaza and further isolate Israel internationally."

The call comes after Republicans in Washington and Israeli officials were quick to express outrage after Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer sharply criticized Netanyahu's handling of the war in Gaza and called for Israel to hold new elections. They accused the Democratic leader of breaking the unwritten rule against interfering in a close ally's electoral politics.

Biden hasn't endorsed Schumer's call for election but said he thought he gave a "good speech" that reflected the concerns of many Americans. Netanyahu raised concerns about the calls by Schumer for new elections, Sullivan said.

Biden administration officials have

warned that they would not support an operation in Rafah without the Israelis presenting a credible plan to ensure the safety of innocent Palestinian civilians. Israel has yet to present such a plan, according to White House officials.

Netanyahu in a statement after the call made no direct mention of the tension.

"We discussed the latest developments in the war, including Israel's commitment to achieving all of the war's goals: Eliminating Hamas, freeing all of our hostages and ensuring that Gaza never (again) constitutes a threat to Israel — while providing the necessary humanitarian aid that will assist in achieving these goals," Netanyahu said.

The Biden-Netanyahu call also came as a new report warned that "famine is imminent" in northern Gaza, where 70% of the remaining population is experiencing catastrophic hunger, and that a further escalation of the war could push around half of Gaza's population to the brink of starvation. The report came from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, a partnership of more than a dozen governments, U.N. aid and other agencies that determines the severity of food crises.

Netanyahu lashed out against the American criticism on Sunday, describing calls for a new election as "wholly inappropriate."

Netanyahu told Fox News Channel that Israel never would have called for a new U.S. election after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and he denounced Schumer's comments as inappropriate.

"We're not a banana republic," he said. "The people of Israel will choose when they will have elections, and who they'll elect, and it's not something that will be foisted on us."

Even as they express frustration about aspects of the Israeli operations, the White House acknowledges that Israel has made significant progress in degrading Hamas. And Sullivan revealed on Monday that an Israeli operation last week killed Hamas' third in command, Marwan Issa.

"The president told the prime minister again today that we share the goal of defeating Hamas, but we just believe you need a coherent and sustainable strategy to make that happen," Sullivan said.

Biden after his State of the Union address earlier this month was caught on a hot mic telling a Democratic ally that he has told Netanyahu they would have a "come to Jesus" meeting over the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. His frustration with Netanyahu's prosecution of the war was also on display in a recent MSNBC interview, in which he asserted Netanyahu was "hurting Israel."

# Ohio still working on storm cleanup

LAKEVIEW, Ohio (AP) — The three people killed when several tornadoes roared through Ohio last week all died from storm-related injuries, authorities said Monday.

Darla Williams, 70, and Marilyn Snapp, 81, both lived in the Geiger Mobile Home Park in Lakeview, while Neal Longfellow, 69, lived in nearby Orchard Island. The two communities were among the hardest hit by severe weather that spread destruction across parts of Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Arkansas and injured dozens Thursday.

At least nine tornadoes and numerous severe thunderstorms struck central Ohio. The most devastating tornado was an EF-3 that began in southern Auglaize County near Fryburg and continued through the Lakeview area in northern Logan County

# Corrections and clarifications

The caption for the front page photo in Monday's edition concerning the open house for Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame inductee Dick Harris inadvertently reversed the relationships of the family members pictured.

Mike Harris is Dick Harris' brother. Don Harris, Cindy Morphett and Patty Thornburg are siblings and are the double cousins of Dick and Mike Harris, the result of their fathers, Claude and Clyde Harris, marrying sisters, Ruba and Mary Garrett.

# Weather

**Tuesday, March 19, 2024**  
**(24-hour observations at 9:54 p.m. Monday at Fort Wayne International Airport)**  
**High: 35; Low: 28; Precipitation: 0.02"**  
**Wabash River Level** (at the Main Street bridge): 2.77 feet at 9:45 p.m. Monday

# Wells County forecast

**Tuesday:** Mostly sunny, with a high near 51. Breezy, with a southwest wind 15 to 25 mph, with gusts as high as 40 mph.

**Tuesday Night:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 32. West wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

**Wednesday:** Sunny, with a high near 41. Northwest wind 15 to 20 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph.

**Wednesday Night:** Mostly clear, with a low around 22. North wind 5 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

**Thursday:** Mostly sunny, with a high near 40.

**Thursday Night:** A 30 percent chance of snow showers after 2 a.m. Partly cloudy, with a low around 28.

**Friday:** A chance of rain and snow showers before 2 p.m., then a chance of rain showers. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 45. Chance of precipitation is 40 percent.

# Area in city under a boil water advisory

A boil water advisory was posted for some residents of southeast Bluffton Monday, but city officials hope that the advisory can be taken down today.

The advisory concerns residents of the 1200 and 1300 blocks of Stoddard Road, along with Honeysuckle and Hollyhock lanes. Water from taps in those areas should be boiled for five minutes until the end of the day tomorrow.

Bluffton Water Distribution Supervisor Dave Hendricks said a water main broke near the affected area. He hopes that the advisory will be lifted sometime today.

The Bluffton Indiana Mayor's Office Facebook page also posted the advisory, further stating that residents should call 260-824-4310 if they need more information.

# Health officer

(Continued from Page 1)

hensive plan" for the funding.

At a minimum, Wells County is eligible for \$549,510 in HFI funding for 2025. The county would be responsible for developing a proposed budget for the funds and tracking information on how the additional funding addresses key performance indicators.

"If we're gonna take \$500,000 of free, nothing is free — that's taxpayer money," Stringer. "We need

to know exactly where that taxpayer money has gone. That's my challenge to you, both of you ... You got a great staff, I know they're working hard on it, but we need the detail."

Wells County was one of six counties not to join HFI in its pilot year. The commissioners have until June to decide whether the county will be opt-in for 2025.

The next scheduled Board of Health meeting is at 6:30 a.m. April 18.

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# City street

(Continued from Page 1)

- Adams Street from Lancaster to the railroad tracks
- Oak Street from Silver to Wabash

- Ohio Street from Williams to Indiana

Not every area will be affected at the same time, but road closings will be taking place soon.

# Pro-Trump attorney arrested after hearing

By **JOEY CAPPELLETTI and NICHOLAS RICCARDI** Associated Press

An attorney facing criminal charges for illegally accessing Michigan voting machines after the 2020 election was arrested Monday after a hearing in a separate case in federal court in Washington, D.C.

Stefanie Lambert was arrested by U.S. Marshals after a hearing over possible sanctions against her for disseminating confidential emails from Dominion Voting Systems, the target of conspiracy theories over former President Donald Trump's 2020 election loss.

Lambert obtained the Dominion emails by representing Patrick Byrne, a prominent funder of election conspiracy theorists who is being sued by Dominion for

defamation.

In a statement, the Marshals office said Lambert was arrested on "local charges." A Michigan judge earlier this month issued a bench warrant for Lambert after she missed a hearing in her case, in which she's charged with four felonies for accessing voting machines in a search for evidence of a conspiracy theory against Trump. Lambert had earlier, unsuccessfully, sued to overturn Trump's loss in Michigan.

Earlier Monday, Lambert had acknowledged passing on the records from Dominion Voting Systems to "law enforcement." She then attached an affidavit that included some of the leaked emails and was signed by Dar Leaf, a county sheriff in northern Michigan who has investigated false claims of

widespread election fraud from the 2020 election, to a filing in her own case in Michigan. The rest of the documents were posted to an account under Leaf's name on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

Leaf did not respond to requests for comment. Lambert's attorney, Daniel Hartman, did not respond to requests for comment.

Byrne wrote in a text that he did not know if Lambert had been arrested, "but if she was, I respect her even more, and she can raise her rate to me."

Lambert contended the Dominion documents obtained under discovery were evidence of "crimes" and needed to be disclosed.

Byrne wrote on X that Lambert "signed an NDA, but she found evidence of ongoing crime, and reported

it to law enforcement. If she found a severed head in discovery box she had a duty to report it to law-enforcement, too."

Dominion on Friday filed a motion demanding Lambert be removed from the Byrne case for violating a protective order that U.S. District Court Judge Moxila A. Upadhyaya had placed on documents in the case. It said Lambert's disclosure had triggered a new round of threats toward the company, which has been at the center of conspiracy theories about Trump's loss.

"These actions should shock the conscience," Dominion wrote in its motion seeking to disqualify Lambert. "They reflect a total disregard for this Court's orders, to say nothing of the safety of Dominion employees."

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## OBITUARIES

### Richard L. Johnson, 89

Richard L. Johnson, 89, of rural Bluffton died March 16, 2024, at Markle Health and Rehabilitation following a lengthy illness.

He was born on June 12, 1934, in Fort Wayne to Quincy and Madge (Randle) Johnson. Richard grew up in Huntington, spending his teens working as a farmhand at several locations in the county. It was during that time he met Phyllis Burley, whom he would marry on June 19, 1955.

Following graduation from Huntington Township High School in 1953, Richard began working at International Harvester in Fort Wayne. He retired from the company 30 years later, in 1983. Richard also held a variety of parttime jobs, including butchering at the Zanesville locker plant and working as a meat cutter at Heyerly's Market in Bluffton.

For decades Richard went on annual fishing trips, flying to secluded lakes in Canada with his good friends Bob Caley and Jerry Felts. They made their last trip in 1998. Other hobbies included cutting wood for home use, mushroom hunting, playing euchre, and cranking homemade ice cream. He was also known for telling really bad jokes.

Richard was a member of the Southwest Assembly of God in Fort Wayne, where he attended since October 1996 and served as a board member.

In addition to his parents, Richard



was preceded in death by his brothers, Henry Johnson and Robert Johnson; stepmother, Grace Johnson; and step-siblings, Chester Lahr, Kenneth Lahr, and Marjorie (Lahr) Miller.

His wife survives, as do their three sons, James (Amy) Johnson of Huntington, Thomas (Brenda Kryder) Johnson of Westfield, and Donald (Elizabeth) Johnson of Knightstown; six grandchildren: Alicia (Calvin) Sellers, Jeremy (Erin) Johnson, Peter Johnson, Mary Johnson, Carrie Johnson, and Hope Johnson; and three great-grandchildren: Marik, Emma, and Jamie Sellers. Also surviving are a stepbrother, Marvin Lahr of Fort Wayne, and a half-brother, Dan (Peggy) Johnson of Huntington.

Viewing will be 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, March 21st at the Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton. A celebration of life service will follow visitation at 1 p.m. at the funeral home, officiated by the Rev. Don Mead, a close friend of the family since the 1970s. Burial will follow at Emmanuel Cemetery, one mile north of Rockford on 500 West.

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the care of the Lemler family of Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home, 308 W. Washington St., in Bluffton. Friends can send online condolences to the Johnson family at [www.thomarich.com](http://www.thomarich.com).

### Darrell L. Jones, 80

Darrell L. Jones, 80, passed away Saturday afternoon, March 16, 2024, at Christian Care Retirement Community following an extended illness.

Darrell was born Dec. 15, 1943, in Bedford, Ky., to William T. and Opal (Dice) Jones. His parents preceded him in death. He married Janet R. (Deppe) in North Vernon, Ind., on July 26, 1968. His wife resides in Bluffton.

Darrell graduated from Aurora High School and attended God's Bible College in Cincinnati, Ohio. He served as a minister for several areas Wesleyan churches. He worked for Crown Unlimited for 15 years and Bi-County Services for 13 years before retiring. Darrell was a member of Grace Fellowship Church in Decatur and was very active in missions work alongside his wife. Darrell and Janet were foster parents to more than 40 children in their home.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years and their four children, Rene (Lonnice) Biberstein of Bluffton, Lana (Chris) Sum-



mers of Bluffton, Troy Jones of Portland, Ore., and Todd (Crystal) Jones of Ossian. He is also survived by five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; two brothers, Bill (Nancy) Jones and Frank Jones; and a sister, Stella Dice.

Darrell was preceded in death by his parents; a twin sister, Helen Grigsby; a sister, Velma Jones; and a brother, Wayne Jones.

Visitation will be from 4 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 20, at the Goodwin - Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel in Bluffton. Services will be held at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, March 21, at the funeral home, with one hour of visitation prior to the service. Pastor Dan Eckelbarger will officiate. Burial will follow at Six Mile Cemetery in Bluffton.

Memorials can be made in Darrell's memory to Christian Care Retirement Community.

Online condolences: [www.goodwin-caleharnish.com](http://www.goodwin-caleharnish.com)

## Police Notebook

### INCIDENTS

**City:**  
Friday, 2:09 p.m., Hardees. Report of a woman in the store cursing.

Friday, 3:03 p.m., Bluffton Gun and Pawn. Report of theft.

Friday, 3:39 p.m., Wells County Courthouse. Officer requested for subject with fake urine.

Friday, 4:31 p.m., 800 block of West Washington Street. Report of custody issue.

Friday, 5:02 p.m., 200 block of North Johnson Street. Report of custody issue.

Friday, 9:43 p.m., 1000 block of West Washington Street. Caller reported domestic disturbance. Nothing physical occurred.

**County:**  
Friday, 12:18 p.m., Wells County Jail. Officer met with subject who advised there were issued with land he inherited.

Friday, 3:16 p.m. North 450 East and East 700 North, Ossian. Report of domestic issue.

Friday, 4:58 p.m., Wells County Jail. Caller requested officer to stand by for custody exchange.

Friday, 7:41 p.m., North 100 West and S.R. 116, Markle. Caller reported woman slumped over wheel in vehicle with two small children. Driver appeared to be heavily intoxicated. Ashley Brock detained on multiple charges.

Friday, 11:07 p.m., S.R. 124 and North 200 West, Bluffton. Car vs. deer.

Saturday, 5:41 a.m., 730 block of Westview Drive, Ossian. Caller reported man knocking on random doors. Officers located subject. Man passed PBT but failed test for THC, subject was on home detention. Elvis Aaron Larkey charged with escape.

Saturday, 4:41 p.m., 10000 South 200 West, Keystone. Report of front door caved in, officer fixed the deadbolt portion of the door to secure it.

Saturday, 5:18 p.m., 10000 South 200 West, Keystone. Report of a subject who broke no contact order.

Saturday, 8:40 p.m., S.R. 116 and North 300 West, Markle. Officer put down injured deer.

Saturday, 11:42 p.m., 7100 East 100 North, Ossian. Report of sound of gunshot.

Sunday, 12:00 a.m., Hickory Lane and Shady Lane, Ossian. Report of a suspicious vehicle in the area.

Sunday, 1:08 a.m., S.R. 1 and East 500 North, Ossian. Driver cited for speeding 70 in a 55 mph zone.

Sunday, 8:06 p.m., 4900 North 300 West, Uniondale. Report of car accident with two

unresponsive subjects.

Monday, 9:07 a.m., Wells County Courthouse. Report of an intoxicated person that came to Community Corrections slurring words. Subject took 18 pills of Xanax in less than 24 hours, claimed the pharmacy did not give him the right amount. Elvis Larkey charged with public intoxication, a Class B misdemeanor.

Monday, 10:32 a.m., River Terrace Estates. Report of theft of narcotics.

### ACCIDENTS

**County:**  
Saturday, 7:03 a.m., S.R. 124 and S.R. 301. Kayla Blanton, 25, Fort Wayne, advised she was driving northbound on S.R. 301 when she stopped at the stop sign and did not see any vehicles approaching. As Blanton proceeded into the intersection, a Dodge Dakota driven by Brant Miller, 23, Decatur, collided with the passenger side of Blanton's Ford Fusion. The Fusion spun clockwise into the stop sign and proceeded into a muddy field approximately 145 ft. from the initial tire marks and impact area. Blanton, as well as a witness driving behind her that was later identified as her boyfriend, said that the Dakota did not have headlights on. Miller was unresponsive at the scene and transported to Lutheran Hospital. Both drivers have submitted a blood sample. Toxicology results are pending.

### ARRESTS

Alyssa Danielle Habermann, 24, Bluffton; domestic battery, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$25,000.

Ashley Nicole Brock, 31, Ossian; operating a vehicle while intoxicated with a passenger less than 18 years of age, a Level 6 felony, and three counts of operating while intoxicated - endangerment, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$8,500.

Jheanomar Pantojas Santos, 23, Fort Wayne; operating a vehicle while intoxicated, a Class C misdemeanor, possession of marijuana, a Class B misdemeanor, and operating a vehicle while intoxicated - endangerment, a Class A misdemeanor.

David Carter Hines, 30, Geneva; operating while intoxicated, a Class C misdemeanor, and operating without ever receiving a license, a Class C misdemeanor. Bond set at \$500.

Ashley Rena Garrett, 36, Bluffton; driving while suspended - prior, a Class A misdemeanor.

William Richardson, 69, Fort Wayne; driving while suspended - prior, a Class A misdemeanor.

## More charges for Delphi suspect

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — A judge approved two additional murder counts Monday against an Indiana man charged in the killings of two teenage girls but rejected a prosecutor's bid to add kidnapping charges.

The new charges approved against Richard Allen of Delphi are murder while committing or attempting to commit kidnapping.

(Continued on Page 10)

## Holcomb: Yes to proclamation but no to legislation

By ISABELLA VOLMERT  
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb vetoed a bill Monday that would have defined antisemitism in state education code while simultaneously signing a proclamation condemning all forms of antisemitism.

The Republican governor cited changes made to the bill in the final days of the legislative session in a news release. Aimed at addressing antisemitism on college campuses, the bill's opponents argued that early versions of it would penalize people for criticizing Israel.

Disagreements between lawmakers in the Republican-controlled state House and Senate threatened to kill the bill before reaching a compromise in the final hours of the legislative session on March 8.

This is the second time the state House has tried to pass the legislation; an identical bill died last year after failing to reach a committee hearing in the state Senate.

Around the country, similar

legislation rose to prominence this session amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

The proposal would broadly define antisemitism as religious discrimination, claiming it would "provide educational opportunities free of religious discrimination."

Defined in 2016 by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, antisemitism is "a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

The original House bill used the organization's definition, which its author has since warned against using in law. It also included "contemporary examples of antisemitism" provided by the group, which make explicit references to Israel. These have been adopted by the U.S. Department of State and under former President Donald Trump, through executive order.

Over 30 states have adopted

the definition in some way either through proclamation, executive order or legislation.

State senators, however, passed an amended version of the bill earlier this month that still included the IHRA's broad definition of antisemitism but deleted the group's name and examples that include explicit references to Israel. Opponents including the Indiana Muslim Advocacy Network and Jewish Voice for Peace Indiana had argued that such direct references would stifle criticism of Israel in academic settings and activism on campuses in support of Palestinians facing a worsening humanitarian crisis and widespread starvation.

The disagreement between the chambers prompted the bill to go to conference committee, a body consisting of lawmakers from both chambers. The committee reached an agreement on the last day of the legislative session to add the IHRA attribution back to the bill but remove the clause with examples. The final version was approved in both chambers with

bipartisan support.

"The language that emerged in the final days of the legislative session fails to incorporate the entire International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition and its important contemporary examples," Holcomb said about vetoing the bill. "Additionally, the confusing language included in the bill could be read to exclude those examples."

The Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council said the group supported the final version of the bill after it passed, as did the Indiana Muslim Advocacy Network, which was opposed to the original version over concerns about academic freedom and advocacy.

Holcomb's support wasn't clear after its passage. Last week, he expressed concern that Indiana would be an "outlier" among other states thanks to the changes and said he wanted to ensure there is no "ambiguity" in Indiana law.

Republican Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita called on Holcomb to veto the bill, saying it

is "toothless" without the mention of the examples.

Holcomb's proclamation condemning antisemitism cites the IHRA definition and its examples. In a statement, Holcomb said the proclamation "ensures we join numerous states and countries by supporting the entire IHRA definition with its inextricable examples."

The JCRC thanked Holcomb in a statement for his "thoughtful" consideration of "the concerns raised in recent days by national experts and the Attorney General."

The group said it will work closely with lawmakers and the state to "ensure that the guidance of Governor Holcomb's proclamation is correctly applied to identify and confront antisemitism and meet the needs of Jewish students in K-12 and higher educational settings."

Holcomb has not vetoed a bill since 2022. Lawmakers can easily overturn a veto in Indiana and only need a simple majority to do so. It's unclear though if or when lawmakers might reconvene.

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## Wave of retirements should serve as a warning for Congress

Recently, I had occasion to look back at some of the early speeches I gave after I first went to Congress in 1965 as a young freshman member from Indiana. Admittedly, six decades is a long time. But even so, what I found was jarring.

Congress, I liked to tell audiences back then, worked in a remarkably hospitable environment. No matter how spirited the policy debate, I told listeners, we were surrounded by what I called “a cocoon of warmth.” We looked out for one another, regardless of party.

Here’s an example. Fairly early in my tenure, I made a mistake on the House floor. I was managing a bill for the Democratic caucus and forgot about a small but crucial parliamentary move that would have locked victory in place. William Bray, a prominent Republican — also from Indiana — came over and put his arm on my shoulder. Gently, he pointed out my blunder and then, remarkably, showed me how to fix it — on a bill he opposed. That was how Congress worked then.

Well. You don’t need me to tell you that things have changed. And it’s not just that when we think of Congress, words like “partisan” and “vitriol” come most easily to mind. It’s that even within the majority Republican caucus in the House, stark divisions have brought things to a standstill. Congress seems unable to act.

And that is taking a toll. House members of both parties are heading for the exits, but the exodus seems especially notable among Republicans. No fewer than five Republican committee chairs — that is to say, legislators who have reached the apex of their power, unless they want to make a bid for the caucus leadership — have announced they’re stepping down. At the moment, over 20 House Republicans are leaving at the end of their terms; that number will almost certainly grow.

And there’s not much question about what’s driving it. As NBC News put it recently, “Mounting frustration with the paralysis and dysfunction in the House is driving out experienced, pragmatic dealmakers on Capitol Hill.” Politico’s Jordain Carney and Olivia Beavers put it even more bluntly. “The departures are starting to spark worries about a further erosion of GOP lawmakers’ appetite for the basic tasks of governing,” they wrote at the end of February.

To be sure, there are Democrats leaving, too, and the reasons for retiring vary, from running for a different office to concerns about health to a chance to make more money as a lobbyist. But many of the people leaving are relatively young — legislators who, by rights, should have promising days ahead. Instead, as Mark Green, a Republican from Tennessee, put it when he announced his retirement, they believe that Congress is “broken beyond most means of repair.”

There’s no question that, at the moment, the future seems grim. But I want to suggest that it doesn’t have to. And to make my point, I want to go back 30 years, to a time in the mid-1990s, when there was a government shut-down much like the one we’re facing now. It was driven by stark ideological differences between Republicans and Democrats and fueled by bitter debate. The GOP leadership shut down most of the federal government for 27 days and Congress’s public standing sank somewhere into the earth’s mantle.

But then members turned things around. In just 10 days they passed a series of major bills, including welfare overhaul and an increase to the minimum wage. They’d rediscovered pragmatism.

I don’t want to say that something like that will happen, only that it’s possible. And that’s my point. It’s not Congress that’s broken, it’s the people working within it who make it so.

Three decades ago, what turned things around was that every time members of Congress went home, they got an earful from constituents who were tired of division and obstruction, and wanted Congress to do its job for the country. Voters were fine with tough debate over the merits of the issues; what they didn’t want was gridlock. Today’s members — especially those inclined toward gridlock — should be getting the same message.

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

## Letters to the Editor

### Another successful prom dress exchange season

The Wells County Prom Dress Exchange recently completed its 15th year. This year, 46 students shopped at the Exchange with a total of 49 gowns being selected from the inventory of donated items. This marked the first year where every shopper left with a dress!

Proceeds from the event; \$400, will be added to the LIGHT Fund (a women’s giving initiative administered by The Wells County Foundation, Inc.). LIGHT provides grants to organizations who serve women and children in Wells County.

This marks the first year that the LIGHT Steering Committee assumed responsibility for coordinating the Exchange. We are grateful to the Committee for their work in collecting donations, sorting, racking the items and preparing the

room for the event. In addition to the LiGHT Steering Committee, additional volunteers for the event were Taylor Coratti, Becky Goshorn, Karen Merkle, Mary Ellen McEvoy, Ann Osborn and Amber Wilson.

Financial contributors to the event included Buckets for Santa (Tony Garton) and an anonymous donor.

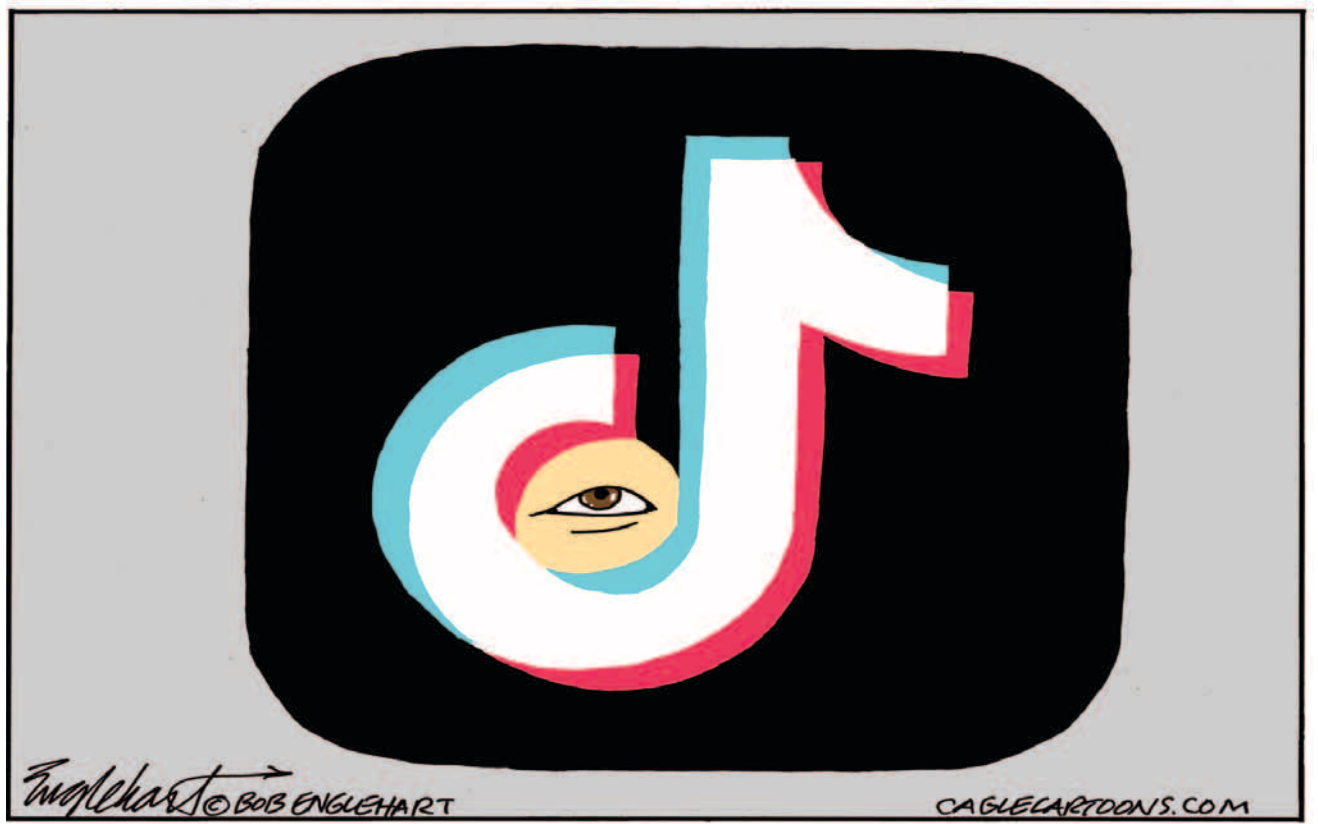
Lastly, we extend appreciation to the many individuals who made this event possible by gifting their gowns, jewelry, and shoes for the event. Donations are accepted at any time and may be dropped off at the Foundation office, 222 West Market Street, Bluffton Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sincerely,  
TERRI EHLE, Chair  
LiGHT Steering Committee  
Wells County Prom Dress Exchange Coordinators



Lee Hamilton

## Hoosier Opinions



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## Congress can’t easily force ByteDance to sell TikTok

Last year, China sent \$427 billion worth of goods to the United States, according to the Census Bureau. This number, however, leaves out one of China’s most important exports: its censorship regime. The country presses, at home and abroad, for foreign institutions and people — including media, universities, celebrities and companies — follow Chinese Communist Party rules on what can be said, or not said, about China. Never mention the Dalai Lama, for one thing. Stay quiet about Chinese human rights abuses. And pretend Taiwan doesn’t exist.

Individuals, institutions and companies that do not toe the party line fear losing access to their sources and their markets, and, obviously, the deeper the involvement with China, the greater the fear. Which is why Congress might force ByteDance, the Chinese owner of TikTok, to either divest the app or shut it down in the United States.

As I’ve written before, I find worries about Chinese interference plausible, but I also doubt they matter as much as the China hawks fear. Yes, about one-third of young American adults regularly get their news from TikTok, and, yes, there’s reason to believe that TikTok might have tuned its algorithm to keep content critical of China from going viral. It’s also reasonable to worry that TikTok might be boosting material that, say, sows political dissension within the United States.

But even if TikTok is acting like an extension of Chinese state-owned media, it isn’t one. Americans have many ways to get news, most of which aren’t owned by China. TikTok might have the capacity to nudge a few people toward more China-friendly views, but putting its thumb on the scales in that way might also destroy user trust. Even if it didn’t, we’re talking about a very modest nudge, not brainwashing.

Unfortunately, when the House Energy and Commerce Committee floated a bill that would force ByteDance to divest, someone at TikTok seems to have thought, “What a great opportunity to prove the China hawks right, and Megan wrong!”

The wise thing to do would have been to stay quiet and work the back channels, reassuring anxious members of Congress that most TikTok users are too busy trying to master the cha-cha to worry about politics. TikTok did the opposite. “We have more than 100 million users,” they thought. “We should use them!” And the app started flashing messages urging those users to call Congress to complain.

House members were promptly flooded with calls, some of which seemed to come from teenagers. Teenagers are not, of course, a reliable voting base. But they do tear at the heartstrings when it seems as though they’re being manipulated by a creepy, authoritarian app. All these passionate demands to leave TikTok alone reinforced lawmakers’ fears that Commie psychos were shaping vulnerable American minds. The bill to require divestment passed out of committee unanimously.

As of Monday, TikTok was continuing its campaign, which I suspect is just making things worse. Though the bill might face stiffer resistance in the Senate, the more the company demonstrates that it

can influence American public opinion on political issues, the more eager Congress will be to take that power out of CCP hands.

But even if it passes, and Biden signs it, there are still a lot of hurdles between here and actually closing a sale.

For starters, this law or any similar law would have to clear the courts, where it would face extra scrutiny because it threatens a platform where tens of millions of Americans exercise their First Amendment rights to express themselves. This is not an insurmountable problem, especially if we’re talking about divestment rather than a ban — the United States has long limited foreign ownership of broadcast stations, and the Chinese owners of Grindr, the LGBTQ+ dating app, were pressured into divesting in 2020 because of national security concerns. But would it be resolved within the 180-day deadline that Congress means to allow ByteDance to sell?

Then TikTok would have to sell itself for a lot of money. Grindr sold for about \$600 million. TikTok is one of the most successful social media apps in the world, and its price tag would be likely to run into the hundreds of billions.

Given the short time frame in the current bill, an initial public offering might be impractical, meaning ByteDance would need to find a buyer. The most obvious candidate would be one of the big tech firms, which have valuable stock to swap and lots of cash on their balance sheets, access to major capital, experience managing tech platforms, and existing products they’d probably love to integrate with TikTok. The problem is, this might run afoul of the Biden administration’s antitrust approach.

Lina Khan, the chair of the Federal Trade Commission, is skeptical of big companies, and very skeptical of big companies that want to get even bigger by merging. Would she stand by and let a tech giant buy TikTok? And knowing the challenge they’d be likely to face, which tech companies would charge into the fray to make an offer?

This doesn’t mean that no buyer would be found — Bobby Kotick, the former chief executive of Activision, is reportedly already trying to put together a deal. But 180 days isn’t a huge amount of time to find, and finance, a competent new owner. And what would happen if the Chinese government tried to block the sale? The app would have to be shut down in the United States, costing its owners billions, enraging those who use it — and paradoxically making two arguments more compelling: first, that the CCP has nefarious uses for TikTok and, second, that any attempt to separate TikTok from the CCP raises serious First Amendment issues.

All of which makes the future rather murky, even if this bill passes in some form. If I had to wager, I’d say that TikTok will maybe someday be sold. But I wouldn’t necessarily bet on that happening someday soon.

Megan McArdle @asymmetricinfo on X



Megan McArdle

## Sending a signal to their left-wing base

The uncommitted voters of Michigan say “jump,” and Chuck Schumer asks “how high”?

The Senate majority leader gave an extraordinary speech flaying the democratically elected leader of an ally engaged in fighting a defensive war against a hideous terrorist enemy.

The speech calling on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to go, along with increasingly critical statements by the White House, shows that the Democrats have decided that appeasing their left-wing base in an election year is now their top consideration.

This is bad all around. As a matter of basic decency, this is not something that allies do to one another, especially not in wartime. Present unvarnished views in private? Absolutely. Try to nudge a partner toward a favored policy? Sure. But blast a friendly government in hopes that it can be toppled via a new election, just months after suffering a monstrous attack and as it is still trying to destroy a terrorist group deeply embedded in an urban environment? No.

The fact of the matter is that this is not Bibi Netanyahu’s war. It is the nation of Israel’s war. Netanyahu sustained political damage after the Oct. 7 attack, but his goal of prosecuting the war against Hamas to its comple-



Rich Lowry

tion is widely shared in Israel. Immediately after the attack, Israel formed a government of national unity that has pursued the war policy that Democrats now find so objectionable. If Netanyahu were to resign tomorrow, any number of things might change, but the war against Hamas would stay the same.

It is easy, sitting in Washington, D.C., and worrying about how to placate the anti-Israel uncommitted voters in the Democratic primary, to forget the shock of the massive pogrom carried out by Hamas on that infamous day in October. Israelis, though, aren’t going to forget, nor should they.

It’s a key tell about Schumer’s intentions that his speech engendered a universally negative reaction in Israel, and Schumer — who is no naïf — must have anticipated as much. Benny Gantz, who would presumably run against Netanyahu in a future election, harshly rejected the Schumer call for a new government. So, the only place where Schumer could have any assurance of advancing his cause was here at home.

What stronger signal could there be that the Democratic leadership has heard the activist calls to rein in Israel than the previously staunch supporter of the Jewish state, Chuck Schumer, unloading on its wartime government?

Hamas has been getting devastated on the battlefield, but the turn against

Israel among Democratic officials in the U.S. is a sign of the success of its longer, deeply cynical strategy. By doing everything in its power to create the predicate for more civilian casualties in Gaza, Hamas hopes to turn international opinion against Israel. So it has done in one of the two major American political parties.

If you had told many of the same Democrats criticizing Israel today that within five months of the Oct. 7 attack they would be inveighing against Israel’s war against Hamas, they would have been incredulous. If you had told them they would be getting pushed around by pro-Hamas sentiment in their own party, they would have rejected the idea as impossible. If you had told them they would have been seeking a two-state solution as one of their highest post-Oct. 7 priorities, they might have considered it a smear.

Yet here we are. On top of everything else, this isn’t good domestic politics. There is still majority support for Israel. The anti-Israel turn demonstrates, yet again, that the Biden campaign is pursuing a base strategy in November. Just the last couple of days, Kamala Harris visited an abortion clinic, Joe Biden suggested there will be no executive action at the border, and Schumer — having run it by the White House first — delivered his philippic.

What’s fidelity to an ally compared to zeal in pursuit of an embattled president’s election strategy?

Rich Lowry is on Twitter @RichLowry

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

# Zanesville News

by Melba Edwards

The Zanesville Town Council meeting is Tuesday, March 19. Everyone is welcome to attend this 6:30 p.m. meeting at the Municipal Building on Wayne Street.

The Zanesville Lions Club is getting ready for their annual Easter Egg Hunt with games after in the clubhouse. On Saturday, March 23, there will be a free Zanesville Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt with over 1,500 eggs at the Zanesville

Lions Club Community Park, 3088 W. Vanhorn St. All ages under 14 can hunt for eggs. Free games with prizes after the hunt inside the clubhouse. This is for all ages. Hunt begins at 1 p.m. and games are open until 3 p.m.

As I write this column on Tuesday, March 12, the tornado siren has sounded for the test. I hope it never has to be used for a tornado here. It is always tested on the first Wednesday of the

month. I do remember a small tornado that passed this way in 1951. I was returning from a math contest in Indianapolis near midnight and the lights were on in the big bank barn at our house just south of town. This was very unusual and I soon found out that a tornado type wind had taken the very large beam out of the top of the barn that Great Grandpa Jonathan Michael had built from the trees on the farm-

land before any house was there. It only hit our barn and then went down again at Baer Field to wreck a plane on the ground.

Not too long ago one also hit land on Yoder Road and destroyed some barns.

As always you are welcome to come and have coffee with other friends and neighbors at the Zanesville Community Church of God's Coffee Cafe that is open weekdays from 7:30 to 10 a.m.

## Jefferson Homemakers hold March meeting

The meeting was opened by Jean Reef chairing the meeting in the absence of president Mary Ann Ripperger by thanking Sharon Snow and Joey Septer for hosting the March meeting.

Thought of the month: Lillian Whiting says that "No one can be unhappy who is filled with interest in the happiness of others."

The inspiration was given by Sharon Snow reading from a favorite booklet on "Spring." The pledge to the American Flag and the Homemakers Creed was recited by 12 ladies in attendance.

Roll call was answered by ladies responding to "How do you celebrate St. Patrick's Day?"

Jean gave a brief history of St. Patrick of Ireland that played a roll in Christianity and died in the 5th Century. According to the Farmer's Almanac, the 3-leaf shamrock stands for the Holy Trinity.

In the absence of Sharon Jump, health and safety leader Vivian Rohr shared the information and what she learned on "Balance" as was presented at the local YMCA, 4-H Park, and Council on Aging.

The minutes were read and approved as was the treasurers report also.

A collection was taken for Nickels for Leadership/Coins for Friendship, and each gave five cents for each letter in SHAMROCK for the club treasury making a donation of 40 cents each.

An interesting reading on March Moon Names were Full Worm Moon by Native Americans, Eagle Moon, Sore Eye Moon, Full Sugar Moon, and Full Wind Strong Moon.

Vivian Rohr provided cards to send to five members having health issues: Liz Bledsoe, Judy Kaehr, Lois Neuen-

schwander, Martha Harris, and Sharon Jump.

An Extra: "When Forest Gump Died" Forest stood in front of St. Peter at the Pearly Gates and St. Peter said, "we now give people an Entrance Exam before we let them into heaven." Forest replied, "Okay, hope it's not too hard, momma said, "Life is like a final exam, it's hard." St. Peter said, "It's only three questions. Here they are." 1) Which two days of the week begin with the letter T? Forest replied, "Today and Tomorrow." 2) How many seconds are in a year? Forest replied, "Jan. 2, Feb. 2, Mar. 2 etc." 3) What is God's first name? Forest replied, "Andy, "And He Walks With Me, And He Talks With Me, etc." and Forest began singing the entire song. St. Peter was in shock and said those aren't the answers I expected, but the gates of heaven swung open and St. Peter said, "Run, Forest, Run."

Judy Schindler and Jean Reef gave a brief report of the District Meeting hosted by Adams County and held at Freidheim Lutheran Church. The theme was "Butterflies, Bees, and Blooms." The meal was good, the building was very accessible and convenient. This time there were four First Timers, the largest crowd for a long time, and they enjoyed three speakers.

Jean reported on the recent County Extension Board meeting. It was agreed to give \$500 Scholarships to two Wells County Seniors in the three public schools with applications being sent to each school. The Board reviewed the By-Laws, and the JT-5 Club is down to four members and will be dissolving as of June 30, 2024, with some of their members joining other clubs. The By-Laws will change and will have the adjustment in the next club book on July 1, 2024.

April meeting: A discussion was held on having a sewing meeting on April 10 (our regular club meeting) at Carol Baker's home. Judy Schindler made a motion that since our Volunteer Community Support Work Day is arranged for April 18, which is close, we will have our regular meeting on April 10 at the Library as usual. Motion was seconded and carried.

If Molly has enough participants, she will offer a Dehydrating Class at Washington Park Pavilion on April 15 and April 22 at 2 p.m. each day. Call 824-6069 to register.

Wells County Community FREE Health Fair will be held on April 3 at the 4-H Expo Hall on the 4-H Grounds from 2-5 p.m.

The Volunteer Community Support Work Day is April 18, 9 to 11:30 a.m. at the 4-H Park.

The Back Pack Program will be gathering all summer 15 oz. cans of fruit and bags used to hold the items the children will take home during the school year.

Homemaker of the Year will be named at the Homemakers Festival. Forms for nominating were available at this meeting and will be available in the office and then due on April 10 in the Extension Office.

The Homemaker's Conference will be held on June 10 and 11 at Purdue with reservations due by May 1. Cost to register for both days is \$200 or \$110 for one day, rooms (four) to room for \$210 per night.

Jean went over the lesson, "How to Make Healthy Choices Eating Out" and provided a hand-out for each to follow along and take home for reference.

Next meeting of the Jefferson Homemakers will be held at 1 p.m. on April 10 at the Ossian Library. Guests are welcome to attend.

## Gloria helps with a special day at school

Seventeen children came beaming in the doorway. There was a slight shuffling as they placed their coats on the couch and lined up in three rows to sing. Our country school next door was having a special day, and we got to be a part of it. The three little boys and I stood at the doorway and listened as the lower grades sang a favorite of mine.

Their innocent voices blend in unison, singing those precious words, "Nobody loves me like you love me, Jesus..."

As their song faded, grades five through eight took over with their turn. This specific song had intrigued me years ago before we were married, now in the last year when I heard it again, I sparked. How profound. Singing in harmony, their voices beautifully blended with equally beautiful words.

I closed my eyes and let it soak in deeply. "...I'm too near home with my Lord, too near home with heaven's reward, to turn back now!"

All too soon the song was past. Filing through the kitchen they filled their plates with snacks and candy I had set out for them. I couldn't help but notice how contentedly they stood in line, waiting on their turn. "Must be some teachers are doing their part in training them," I mused.

Everyone found spots to sit down while we snacked and chatted. Julia and I laughed as we rehased the evening before when she was trying to figure out

what the special event at school would be. Though the teachers had not given them details, they had told them to wear everyday clothes. Julia had her curious mind spinning wide open, determined to figure out the mystery, at the same time not wanting to know it, so as not to ruin the fun of a surprise.

Behind the children's backs I had prepared cookie batter and various things for the children to do after the teachers had offered for them all to come help us for an hour. A clue paper of where they would go next, was written and hidden where one of the children would find it while sweeping.

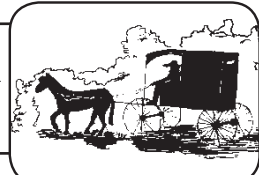
Now watching Julia in the kitchen with her friends, I savored the moment. Hosanna was chatting with the younger children, and Austin was in the living room with the boys.

As soon as we were done with snack the teachers asked what project I have lined up for them. Again my heart was warmed; yes, we missed Daniel on a day as such, yet it was touching to see all these little (and some bigger) hands, here to help and show they cared.

I gave the teachers an outline of some cleaning, followed by kitchen work including making energy balls and baking cookies. "And here in this wicker basket are baker's aprons and hats for the girls to wear, which have been gifted to us by column readers." This brought smiles to their faces. Without much ado the

## The Amish Cook

by Gloria Yoder



two teachers, both young girls in their twenties, had everything planned and in place.

I stepped out on the porch to give the three oldest boys instructions on moving the electro-netting to provide fresh pasture for the sheep. They went at it with gusto, it was obvious they knew what they were doing. When I stepped back in the kitchen windows were shining and a fresh clean smell mingled with the aroma of fresh cookies. A couple of the girls had replaced their traditional head covering with baker's caps, matching their aprons, sweetly shaping energy balls.

"Gloria, your sheep are out by the flower bed!" Someone exclaimed.

I debated. I was knee deep into various projects... this time of they year they won't really ruin anything, and surely they won't go anywhere until the new fence is up.

Moments later, a little girl told me that all eight of them were heading out the driveway and walking toward the schoolhouse. I sprinted into action. Running to the barn, I grabbed a bucket of feed. I handed it to Julia who offered to go after them. With the help of her friend Bethany, they soon had them herded back home and into the new pas-

ture. Almost as quickly as they had come they were gone again, to bless others. The aroma of fresh cleanliness and gratitude could be felt as I walked through the house absorbing this golden moments.

A lift such as this, seems provide a boost for more than just a day, giving me extra time to work in the kitchen, which I have come to enjoy once more. Join our family for this one-of-a-kind pizza. Daniel loved when I'd make it in the first years we were married. It provides you with that pizza flavor without the work that generally goes into a pizza.

**Bubble-up Pizza**  
8 ounces (2 cans) butter-milk biscuits  
1 pounds sausage or hamburger, browned and seasoned

1 quart pizza sauce  
½ cup mushrooms  
½ cup chopped onions  
¼ cup diced peppers  
Pepperoni slices  
1 cup Mozzarella cheese, shredded  
1 cup Cheddar cheese, shredded

Cut biscuits into four pieces and toss into a 9x13 inch cake pan. Add remaining ingredients and mix together. You may add or omit any pizza toppings of your choice. Bake 1 hour at 275 degrees. Unique and equally delicious!

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# LeVert, Allen lead short-handed Cavs past Pacers

By **PHILLIP B. WILSON**  
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Caris LeVert and Jarrett Allen each scored 23 points and the short-handed Cleveland Cavaliers fended off a late push from the Indiana Pacers for a 108-103 win on Monday night.

Cleveland played without three regular starters, including star guard Donovan Mitchell, as the Cavs fight to hold onto a top-three seed in the Eastern Conference.

Cleveland led by as many as nine in the final quarter before Indiana pulled even with 2:05 remaining. LeVert drove baseline and then pulled up and swished a 9-foot fade-away jumper to regain the lead. The Pacers didn't score again.

"I'm very comfortable in those situations," LeVert said. "I knew what I was going to."

LeVert had 11 assists and eight rebounds. Allen had nine rebounds.

"We've got a lot of guys capable of con-

tributing and making big plays down the stretch," LeVert said. "Our defense really held up the last three quarters of the game and won us that game. That's a good offensive team. We held them to what, 103? That says a lot about our defense."

Mitchell, who averages a team-high 27.4 points, remains slowed by a left knee bruise that has bothered him since the break. It's likely the Cavs will rest him a few more games so he's ready for the postseason. Forward Evan Mobley (ankle) and guard Max Strus (knee) were also out.

The absences necessitated signing veteran forward Marcus Morris Sr. to a 10-day contract. Morris scored 14 off the bench in 20 minutes.

"It took toughness," Cavs coach J.B. Bickerstaff said. "It took resilience. It took



togetherness to make sure that we never splintered, even with adversity and ups and downs."

Pascal Siakam led the Pacers with 19 points and 12 rebounds. All-Star Tyrese Haliburton had 14 points and 12 assists. Reserve guard T.J. McConnell scored 14.

"We're just not getting enough stops down the stretch," Haliburton said. "And we're not capitalizing enough offensively and that starts with me."

The Cavs entered the night as the conference's No. 3 seed, just behind the Milwaukee Bucks and ahead of the New York Knicks with a few weeks left in the regular season.

The Pacers dropped to the No. 7 seed with the loss, passed by the Philadelphia 76ers who beat the Miami Heat on Monday

night. "We did some good things to fight out of the hole," Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said. "But consistency wasn't there. It's a tough loss."

The Pacers led by as much as 15 midway through the second quarter but then went scoreless for about four minutes.

"I honestly think we just didn't really make any shots," McConnell said. "We got a couple of good looks and they just didn't go in."

The Cavaliers surged with an 11-0 run to tie the game in the final minute of the first half.

"We've got to stay positive," Carlisle said. "We've got to be more hungry than everybody we're playing right now."

## UPNEXT

Cavaliers: Host Miami Heat on Wednesday. Pacers: Visit Detroit Pistons on Wednesday.

## Denny Hamlin keeps winning despite new role as NASCAR's most polarizing driver

By **MARK LONG**  
AP Sports Writer

Denny Hamlin was booed in celebration again.

The Joe Gibbs Racing superstar, a driver whose 52 wins in the Cup Series rank as the 13th most in NASCAR history, heard another heaping of disapproval and contempt when he climbed from his No. 11 Toyota at Bristol Motor Speedway on Sunday.

Victor and villain. Hamlin stopped short of egging the hostile crowd on this time, though. After winning his second consecutive victory at the famed short track — his fourth overall inside the concrete coliseum — Hamlin skipped his catchphrase "I just beat your favorite driver" and simply flashed his index finger in every direction to remind everyone who finished No. 1.

Surely some of his detractors responded with a different finger.

It's become the surreal norm for Hamlin and shows no signs of quieting even as he continues to rise NASCAR's all-time win chart. Hamlin has Hall of Famers Lee Petty (54) and Rusty Wallace (55) within reach this season and has closed the gap on Kyle Busch (63) for the most wins by an active driver.

He may already have surpassed Busch as the most hated driver in the garage.

"I don't mind it. I really don't because it's just noise," Hamlin said before the race. "There were many moments mid-career where there was just claps; that's just not a needle mover one way or the other. A lot of it comes with success as well. If you are a contender each and every week, you are going to get more noise typically."

The "noise" seems to be getting louder, and Hamlin knows why. He's had altercations with two of NASCAR's most popular drivers, the first coming in 2017 with Chase Elliott and the latest coming last year with Kyle Larson.

Hamlin first drew a strong negative reaction seven years ago at his hometown track in Martinsville, Virginia, after he wrecked Elliott in a playoff race. It knocked Elliott out of con-

## White Sox left-hander Garrett Crochet will start on opening day

By **STEVE MEGARGEE**  
AP Sports Writer

Garrett Crochet's first career start will be one to remember.

The Chicago White Sox will hand the ball to Crochet on opening day, showing their faith in his transition from the bullpen to the starting rotation. The hard-throwing Crochet has made 72 career appearances, but all have come in relief.

That will change March 28 when the White Sox host the Detroit Tigers to start the season.

"Very shocked to say the least," Crochet told reporters Monday. "I heard they had some exciting news for me, and I thought it was just that I'd made the rotation."

The White Sox didn't have any obvious candidates for opening day after they traded Dylan Cease to the San Diego Padres last week. The 24-year-old Crochet has made an impression this spring by striking out 12 and walking none in nine scoreless innings, though he has started in only one of his four Cactus League appearances.

Crochet, a 6-foot-6 left-hander, was selected by Chicago with the No. 11 overall pick in the 2020 amateur draft out of the University of Tennessee. He missed the 2022 season while he recovered from Tommy John surgery.

For his career, he owns a 3-7 record with

tention for the championship the following week.

Hamlin seemed to reignite those memories last May when he publicly and loudly called for Elliott to be suspended after Elliott intentionally wrecked him in the Coca-Cola 600. NASCAR did, and fans blamed Hamlin even though the punishment was in line with similar altercations.

Back in the public crosshairs, Hamlin forced Larson up the track and into the wall at Pocono Raceway last July while they battled for the lead with less than 10 laps to go. Hamlin went on to win and was loudly booed after exiting his car on the frontstretch.

"I have had so many altercations with so many popular drivers, and that just kind of fuels it as well," Hamlin said. "I've checked all of the boxes of the things that fans despise. We've seen a previous driver (Busch) at Joe Gibbs Racing, he just changes teams and he's more liked."

"When you've got all the things that I've got in that box in the negativity checked, you are just going to have to live that life."

Actor/professional wrestler Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson offered Hamlin some advice at the season-opening Daytona 500. Johnson, the grand marshal, told Hamlin to lean into the villain role like Johnson has in his return to the WWE.

"The rare air is when you have the opportunity and you grab it by the throat and you don't let it go and that's the opportunity to be a great bad guy," Johnson said.

The best bad guys win, and Hamlin did that Sunday for the 21st time in the last six seasons — more than anyone else in the series over that span.

Hamlin's latest win was a gem. He led 47 of the final 48 laps in a tire-management race dominated by JGR. The four-car team — which includes Martin Truex Jr., Ty Gibbs and Christopher Bell — combined to lead 383 of 500 laps at the bullring track nicknamed "The Last Great Colosseum."

"That's what I grew up doing here in the short tracks of the whole mid-Atlantic," Hamlin said. "South Boston, Martinsville. Once it became a tire-management race, I liked our chances."

And Hamlin ended up in victory lane holding a sword, a fitting trophy for a villain who suddenly finds himself under attack after wins.

a 2.71 ERA and 85 strikeouts in 73 innings. Now he gets to show what he can do as a starter.

"It's humbling and very gratifying," Crochet said. "I worked my tail off this spring, had a lot of solid veterans to lean on this camp and was able to put together a good couple of outings. I feel like I earned it. I feel like I've kind of been waiting for this moment but didn't really know if it would come, so to be awarded this, it's a huge honor."

### TWINS' DURAN TO MISS START OF SEASON

The Minnesota Twins will open their AL Central title defense without closer Jhoan Duran, who has a moderate oblique strain.

Duran, reliever Caleb Thielbar and starting pitcher Anthony DeSclafani all are expected to open the season on the injured list. Thielbar has a hamstring injury, while DeSclafani is dealing with an elbow issue.

### SHOWALTER'S NEW JOB

Former New York Mets manager Buck Showalter will rejoin MLB Network as an analyst. The network announced Monday that it is bringing back Showalter.

Showalter previously worked for MLB Network from 2020-21. He was named NL Manager of the Year after leading the Mets to 101 wins in 2022 but was fired after they slipped to 75-87 last season.

## High School Calendar

**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.  
**MONDAY, MARCH 25**  
No events scheduled.  
**TUESDAY, MARCH 26**  
No events scheduled.  
**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27**  
No events scheduled.  
**THURSDAY, MARCH 28**  
No events scheduled.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 29**  
BASEBALL: Norwell vs. Evansville Central at Edgewood High School, 7:30 p.m.  
**SATURDAY, MARCH 30**  
BASEBALL: Norwell vs. Edgewood, 10 a.m.; Norwell vs. Brownstown Central at Edgewood high School, 5:30 p.m.

## NL Central Preview: Cardinals, Cubs and Reds are at the front of a wide-open division

By **JAY COHEN**  
AP Baseball Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — The St. Louis Cardinals signed Sonny Gray, Lance Lynn and Kyle Gibson. The Chicago Cubs added Shota Imanaga and Héctor Neris. Even the Cincinnati Reds and Pittsburgh Pirates jumped into free agency.

There are no tanking teams in the NL Central right now, making for a wide-open landscape in a division that was captured by St. Louis or Milwaukee in five of the past six years.

It was Milwaukee's turn in 2023, finishing nine games ahead of second-place Chicago. But the top of the Brewers' rotation took a hit when Corbin Burnes was traded to Baltimore and Brandon Woodruff had shoulder surgery.

That problem belongs to Pat Murphy, who was promoted to manager after Craig Counsell departed for Chicago in a move that adds a little spice to one of the division's best rivalries. "Glad he's on our side now," Cubs outfielder Ian Happ said of his new skipper.

Cincinnati was in the mix for a playoff spot in 2023 before fading to an 82-80 record. The Reds then strengthened their pitching staff by signing Frankie Montas, Nick Martinez and Emilio Pagan.

Even Pittsburgh got into the act, adding reliever Aroldis Chapman and left-hander Martín Pérez, and bringing back Andrew McCutchen on a one-year contract.

The Reds last won the division in 2012. The Pirates have never won the NL Central; their last division title happened in the NL East in 1992.

### HOW THEY PROJECT

#### 1.) Chicago Cubs

With the additions of Counsell and Imanaga, along with the return of Cody Bellinger, it was a very good offseason for Cubs President of Baseball Operations Jed Hoyer. Imanaga is a Japanese left-hander with an impressive arsenal that should help ease his transition to the majors. He steps into a rotation fronted by Justin Steele, who went 16-5 with a 3.06 ERA last year

in a breakout performance. Bellinger is looking to prove himself once again after he hit a career-best .307 with 26 homers and 97 RBIs in his first season in Chicago. Michael Busch was acquired in a January trade with the Dodgers, and the Cubs are hoping the young infielder

is ready for a regular role. The big variable for Chicago is Christopher Morel, a streaky slugger who blasted 26 homers last season but also struck out 133 times in 107 games.

#### 2.) Cincinnati Reds

Cincinnati's promising young infield, led by Elly De La Cruz and Matt McLain, took a hit when Noelvi Marte was suspended for 80 games after testing positive for a performance-enhancing substance. But the Reds have several different ways to replace Marte while he is out. Jeimer Candelario signed with the team in free agency, and 2021 NL Rookie of the Year Jonathan India also could be a factor in the infield alignment. Injuries for Hunter Greene, Nick Lodolo and Graham Ashcraft turned Cincinnati's rotation into a patchwork mess last season, but Andrew Abbott and Brandon Williamson gained some valuable experience that could pay off this time around. Montas also joins the rotation after an injury-decimated stint with the Yankees.

#### 3.) St. Louis Cardinals

It's hard to imagine the vaunted Cardinals repeating their lackluster performance from last season. St. Louis went 71-91 in 2023 and finished last in the NL Central. It was the franchise's first losing record since it went 78-84 in 2007. Its rotation had a 5.08 ERA, and that was the Cardinals' biggest focus in the offseason. Gray cashed in with a \$75 million, three-year contract after he had a 2.79 ERA in 32 starts with Minnesota. Lynn and Gibson each got a one-year deal. But each of the three right-handers is on

the wrong side of 34, and Lynn surrendered a major league-high 44 homers in 32 starts last year. Paul Goldschmidt and Nolan Arenado are back to help anchor the lineup, and Jordan Walker could be even better after a solid rookie season.

#### 4.) Milwaukee Brewers

Rhys Hoskins fills a hole at first base after signing a \$34 million, two-year contract in free agency. Also worth watching is an athletic group of young position players that includes Jackson Chourio, Garrett Mitchell, Sal Frelick and Brice Turang. Mitchell, Frelick and Turang are former first-round picks in the amateur draft, and the 20-year-old Chourio is one

of baseball's top prospects. Following the Burnes trade and Woodruff's injury, Freddy Peralta is the team's top starting pitcher. The right-hander went 12-10 with a 3.86 ERA in a career-high 30 starts last year. Wade Miley was brought back on a one-year contract, but the veteran lefty has been slowed by injuries. If the Brewers stumble early on, closer Devin Williams and shortstop Willy Adames could be two of the top names on the market ahead of the trade deadline. Williams will begin the season on the injured list because of two stress fractures in his back.

#### 5.) Pittsburgh Pirates

With Oneil Cruz, Ke'Bryan Hayes and Henry Davis, the Pirates have the beginning of what they hope becomes a solid young core. Cruz is looking for a healthy campaign after he missed most of last season with a fractured left ankle. Hayes continued his development in 2023, winning his first Gold Glove at third base while batting .271 with a career-best 15 homers and 61 RBIs. Davis, a catcher and right fielder, was the No. 1 overall pick in the 2021 amateur draft. Marco Gonzalez was acquired in a trade with Atlanta in December, putting another veteran arm in the rotation behind All-Star right-hander Mitch Keller.



Denny Hamlin



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# News-Banner Scoreboard

### BASKETBALL

#### High School Boys' Basketball

**1A**  
Bethesa Christian (23-7) vs. Fort Wayne Canterbury (18-9), 10:30 a.m.

**2A**  
Brownstown Central (27-4) vs. Wapahani (26-2)

**3A**  
Scottsburg (24-5) vs. South Bend St. Joseph (20-9), 6 p.m.

**4A**  
Ben Davis (23-5) vs. Fishers (28-1), 8:15 p.m.

At Harry A. Gampel Pavilion Storrs, Conn.  
Auburn (20-11) vs. Arizona (17-15), 7 p.m.

At Carver-Hawkeye Arena Iowa City, Iowa  
Holy Cross (20-12) vs. UT Martin (16-16), 9 p.m.

**Wednesday, March 20**  
At Colonial Life Arena Columbia, S.C.  
Sacred Heart (24-9) vs. Presbyterian (20-14), 7 p.m.

At Cassell Coliseum Blacksburg, Va.  
Vanderbilt (22-9) vs. Columbia (23-6), 9 p.m.

### NBA

**Sunday's Games**  
Milwaukee 140, Phoenix 129  
Miami 104, Detroit 101  
Dallas 107, Denver 105  
Orlando 111, Toronto 96  
Boston 130, Washington 104  
San Antonio 122, Brooklyn 115, OT  
Atlanta 110, L.A. Clippers 93

**Monday's Games**  
Cleveland 108, Indiana 103  
Boston 119, Detroit 94  
Philadelphia 98, Miami 91  
Chicago 110, Portland 107  
Minnesota 114, Utah 104  
Memphis at Sacramento, late  
New York at Golden State, late  
Atlanta at L.A. Lakers, late

**Tuesday's Games**  
Charlotte at Orlando, 7 p.m.  
Houston at Washington, 7 p.m.  
New Orleans at Brooklyn, 7:30 p.m.

Dallas at San Antonio, 8 p.m.  
Denver at Minnesota, 9 p.m.

**Wednesday's Games**  
Indiana at Detroit, 7 p.m.  
Miami at Cleveland, 7 p.m.  
Milwaukee at Boston, 7:30 p.m.  
Sacramento at Toronto, 7:30 p.m.  
Utah at Oklahoma City, 8 p.m.  
L.A. Clippers at Portland, 10 p.m.  
Memphis at Golden State, 10 p.m.  
Philadelphia at Phoenix, 10 p.m.

**Thursday's Games**  
New Orleans at Orlando, 7 p.m.  
Sacramento at Washington, 7 p.m.  
Brooklyn at Milwaukee, 8 p.m.  
Chicago at Houston, 8 p.m.  
Utah at Dallas, 8:30 p.m.  
New York at Denver, 9 p.m.  
Atlanta at Phoenix, 10:30 p.m.

Toronto at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.  
Winnipeg at N.Y. Rangers, 7 p.m.  
Carolina at N.Y. Islanders, 7:30 p.m.  
Colorado at St. Louis, 8 p.m.  
San Jose at Nashville, 8 p.m.  
Montreal at Edmonton, 9 p.m.  
Buffalo at Vancouver, 9 p.m.  
Chicago at Los Angeles, 10 p.m.  
Minnesota at Anaheim, 10 p.m.  
Tampa Bay at Vegas, 10 p.m.

**Wednesday's Games**  
Toronto at Washington, 7:30 p.m.  
Arizona at Dallas, 8 p.m.  
Minnesota at Los Angeles, 10 p.m.

**Thursday's Games**  
N.Y. Islanders at Detroit, 7 p.m.  
N.Y. Rangers at Boston, 7 p.m.  
Philadelphia at Carolina, 7 p.m.  
St. Louis at Ottawa, 7 p.m.  
Winnipeg at New Jersey, 7 p.m.  
Nashville at Florida, 7:30 p.m.  
Buffalo at Edmonton, 9 p.m.  
Chicago at Anaheim, 10 p.m.  
Montreal at Vancouver, 10 p.m.  
Seattle at Vegas, 10:30 p.m.  
Tampa Bay at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.

Toronto (ss) at Philadelphia, 1:05 p.m.

Washington 9, N.Y. Mets (ss) 8  
Toronto (ss) 9, Minnesota 4  
N.Y. Mets (ss) 7, Miami 6  
Chicago Cubs 8, Texas 6  
Chicago White Sox at Oakland, 4:05 p.m.

Colorado 5, San Francisco 3  
Arizona (ss) 2, L.A. Angels 0  
Arizona (ss) 5, Seattle 4  
Cleveland 4, Cincinnati 2  
Milwaukee 6, Kansas City 4  
San Diego at LG Twins, 11 p.m.

**Monday's Games**  
Korea at L.A. Dodgers, 6 a.m.  
N.Y. Yankees 4, Philadelphia (ss) 3  
Tampa Bay 7, Atlanta 3  
Minnesota 5, Boston 2  
Pittsburgh 11, Philadelphia (ss) 2  
Miami 6, Houston (ss) 5  
Seattle 9, Texas 5  
Cleveland 8, Chicago White Sox 5  
Milwaukee 4, L.A. Angels 3  
Oakland at Arizona, 4:10 p.m.  
Washington 10, Houston (ss) 1

San Francisco at Cincinnati, 9:05 p.m.

**Tuesday's Games**  
Tampa Bay at Boston, 1:05 p.m.  
Miami (ss) at St. Louis (ss), 1:05 p.m.  
Baltimore at Toronto, 1:07 p.m.  
Milwaukee at Cleveland (ss), 4:05 p.m.  
Oakland at Texas, 4:05 p.m.  
Cincinnati at L.A. Angels, 4:10 p.m.  
Cleveland (ss) at Colorado (ss), 4:10 p.m.  
Colorado (ss) at Seattle, 4:10 p.m.  
Miami (ss) at Houston, 6:05 p.m.  
Philadelphia at Detroit, 6:05 p.m.  
St. Louis (ss) at N.Y. Mets, 6:10 p.m.  
Arizona at Chicago Cubs, 9:05 p.m.  
Kansas City at San Francisco, 10:05 p.m.

**Wednesday's Games**  
Detroit at Minnesota, 1:05 p.m.  
Chicago Cubs at Oakland, 4:05 p.m.

### HOCKEY

#### NHL

**Sunday's Games**  
N.Y. Rangers 5, N.Y. Islanders 2  
Vegas 3, New Jersey 1  
Carolina 7, Ottawa 2  
Chicago 5, San Jose 2  
Winnipeg 6, Columbus 1  
Pittsburgh 6, Detroit 3  
St. Louis 4, Anaheim 2

**Monday's Games**  
Washington 5, Calgary 2  
Buffalo 6, Seattle 2

**Tuesday's Games**  
Columbus at Detroit, 7 p.m.  
Ottawa at Boston, 7 p.m.  
Pittsburgh at New Jersey, 7 p.m.

### BASEBALL

#### MLB

**Sunday's Games**  
Korea at San Diego, 6 a.m.  
Pittsburgh 8, Tampa Bay 4  
Baltimore (ss) 8, Atlanta (ss) 2  
St. Louis 10, Houston 6  
Boston (ss) 12, N.Y. Yankees 6  
Baltimore (ss) at Detroit, 1:05 p.m.  
Boston (ss) at Atlanta (ss), 1:05 p.m.

### College

**Men's Basketball Schedule FIRST FOUR**  
**Tuesday, March 19**  
At UD Arena Dayton, Ohio  
Howard (18-16) vs. Wagner (16-15), 6:40 p.m.  
Virginia (23-10) vs. Colorado St. (24-10), 9:10 p.m.

**Wednesday, March 20**  
At UD Arena Dayton, Ohio  
Montana St. (17-17) vs. Grambling St. (20-14), 6:40 p.m.  
Boise St. (22-10) vs. Colorado (24-10), 9:10 p.m.

**Women's Basketball Scores FIRST FOUR**  
**Thursday, March 21**

## Agriculture

# Young among senators demanding the Biden administration increase ag exports

### By HOOSIER AG TODAY

Senator Todd Young (R-IN) is among 22 Republican Senators who are demanding President Biden and his administration focus more attention on increasing U.S. agricultural exports and improving the competitiveness of U.S. products abroad.

On Wednesday, Young joined his colleagues in signing a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

“We expect trade to fluctuate in response to macroeconomic factors and market conditions,” wrote the senators. “However, the current sharp decline in U.S. agricultural exports is directly attributable to and exacerbated by an unambitious U.S. trade strategy that is failing to meaningfully expand market access or reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade. While the Biden administration continually refuses to pursue traditional free trade agreements, China, Canada, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and others continue to ink trade pacts that diminish American export opportunities and global economic influence.”

The letter was also signed by U.S. Senators John Thune (R-SD), Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), Ted Budd (R-NC), Kevin Cramer (R-ND), Mike

Crapo (R-ID), Steve Daines (R-MT), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Deb Fischer (R-NE), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), John Hoeven (R-ND), Ron Johnson (R-WI), James Lankford (R-OK), Roger Marshall (R-KS), Jerry Moran (R-KS), Pete Ricketts (R-NE), Jim Risch (R-ID), Mike Rounds (R-SD), Tim Scott (R-SC), Thom Tillis (R-NC), and Tommy Tuberville (R-AL).

The full letter can be found below:

Dear Ambassador Tai and Secretary Vilsack:

We write to express deep concern with the continued erosion of critical markets for U.S. agricultural exports. For decades, the United States steadily increased market access for U.S. food and agricultural products. We accomplished this feat through negotiations of actual free trade agreements, removal of technical barriers to trade, and holding our trading partners accountable to their commitments, all of which have helped strengthen the agriculture economy at home and developed important strategic relationships abroad. Yet, in the last fiscal year (FY) alone, U.S. agricultural exports declined by more than \$17 billion, and recent forecasts show a further decline by more than \$8 billion in FY 2024. As a result, the U.S. agricultural trade deficit is projected to reach a record \$30.5 billion in FY 2024. This decline is unsustainable, and we urge

the Biden administration to immediately take action to improve the competitiveness of U.S. agricultural products abroad and reverse this trend.

We expect trade to fluctuate in response to macroeconomic factors and market conditions. However, the current sharp decline in U.S. agricultural exports is directly attributable to and exacerbated by an unambitious U.S. trade strategy that is failing to meaningfully expand market access or reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade. While the Biden administration continually refuses to pursue traditional free trade agreements, China, Canada, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and others continue to ink trade pacts that diminish American export opportunities and global economic influence.

International trade is critical to the continued success of U.S. agriculture. For the 2023 marketing year, nearly 70 million acres of major crops like corn, soybeans, and wheat were planted to meet the demands of our foreign customers. Additionally, more than 95 percent of U.S. cotton produced, nearly 80 percent of almonds produced, and more than 70 percent of nonfat milk powder produced were destined for the export market in 2023. And in a typical year, half of U.S.-produced rice and 20 percent of U.S.-produced

potatoes are exported. Diminishing access to foreign agricultural markets for U.S. industries creates significant economic headwinds and jeopardizes the livelihoods of more than one million American workers, farmers, and ranchers, as well as millions more U.S. jobs throughout the export supply chain.

With our concerns in mind, please respond to the following questions within 14 days of your receipt of this letter.

What specific actions does the Biden administration plan to take to increase U.S. agricultural exports in 2024?

Does the Biden administration intend to pursue new or improved free trade agreements with any countries to obtain new market access for agricultural products in 2024?

We further ask the Biden administration to take steps to analyze and consider the relationship between U.S. competitiveness and market share in foreign agricultural markets with negotiated tariffs, tariff rate quotas, and other market access provisions.

A continued decline in U.S. agricultural exports is avoidable and unacceptable. The Biden administration must take immediate action to ensure this does not become a long-term trend. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

## ISDA offering low-interest loans for small meat processors

### By HOOSIER AG TODAY

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture has announced that small and very small meat processors in need of funding can apply for low-interest loans.

The Indiana Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program (MPIIP) is a \$15 million revolving loan program that assists Indiana meat and poultry packers and processors with access to affordable capital for meat expansion projects. This intermediary lending program addresses critical meat expansion needs, which developed and have continued since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program will support local livestock producers by allowing their market ready livestock to be processed within their communities and help to reduce processing delays. ISDA will be working closely with the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), who will serve as the intermediary lender. ISDA is also partnering with the Indiana Small Business Development Centers (ISBDC) who will assist in development of meat expansion projects and loan packages with local meat packers and processors.

“This program is a big step forward in allowing farmers to process their livestock locally,” USDA Rural Development Indiana State Director Dr. Terry Goodin, said. “It shows the impor-

tance of investing locally and allows rural Hoosier livestock producers to send their market-ready livestock without delays.”

Meat expansion projects will add local job opportunities and tax revenues for local communities and the State of Indiana.

Eligible entities include small meat processors looking to expand or entrepreneurs who would like to open a new facility.

#### Loan Terms:

- 3% interest rates for scalable loans from \$100,000 up to \$5 million;
- 2% interest rates for wastewater projects; and
- Up to 15-year loan terms.

ISDA is working closely with the Indiana Bankers Association (IBA) to encourage local bank participation in the meat expansion revolving loans that will result in blended interest rates while preserving local bank relationships.

Eligible expenses may include, but are not limited to:

- Purchase/upgrade of equipment, infrastructure and technology – including installation;
- Purchase or construction of a new facility;
- Start-up costs, working capital, fees or expenses related to meeting federal or state standards;
- Increasing packaging and labeling capabilities; and
- Pollution control and abatement including waste-

water and transportation.

“We are thrilled to announce this first-ever loan program through the Indiana State Department of Agriculture,” said Don Lamb, ISDA director. “Traditional bank funding for agribusinesses can be challenging, especially for meat processors, so we are excited to work hand in hand with our partners to ensure this needed funding is available to our Hoosier businesses.”

“This loan program is a first of its kind for our Indiana State Department of Agriculture and I am excited to support them in this unique opportunity for Hoosier agribusinesses,” said Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, the Secretary of ISDA. “We know that more and more Hoosiers are shopping local for meat products and our small meat processors are struggling to keep up with demand. Additionally, some traditional business loans can be hard to secure for this industry, so this low interest loan program will go a long way in ensuring our local meat processors can expand and Hoosier customers get the products they are seeking.”

The Indiana Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program will open for applications on April 1, 2024. For information regarding the Indiana Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program, please contact David Coates at dcoates@isda.in.gov.

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# BHS plan could give students fast start in college

**By SYDNEY KENT**  
Students at Bluffton High School may soon have the opportunity to finish their first year of college — at the same time that they graduate high school.

BHS Principal Steve Baker presented the idea, which has also been discussed at the state level, to the Bluffton-Harrison school board at their meeting on Monday. The topic was discussed following a moment of silence to acknowledge the accident that claimed the lives of two Ossian teens on Sunday.

Baker explained that the Indiana College Core is a block of 30 credit hours of college-level coursework in six competency areas. Awarded as a certificate, the ICC is guaranteed to transfer between all Indiana public colleges and universities.

Board member Angie Sheets asked if the credits would still apply to students, should they only complete part of the 30 required credits.

Baker explained that while the student would not receive the ICC distinction diploma, the credits they earned would still apply after graduation. Baker also explained that some courses would accommodate the schedule of the student, while others would be offered at the discretion of the college. Baker confirmed that the school is prepared to work with either situation.

Teachers in the district are offered an incentive to

complete further education to teach the dual credit program. Superintendent Brad Yates said that teachers can be reimbursed for the training, or for their time while completing courses.

Baker estimated that approximately 5-8% of students would take advantage of the program. A parent and student meeting will be held soon.

“This is a big deal for Bluffton High School,” Baker concluded. “If you’re a parent listening and thinking, ‘My child could have that first year of college done and paid for, sign me up,’ then this is for you.”

“We’re still in investigative mode,” Yates added. “Our intention is to have that expense covered for our students.”

Improvements to the exterior of Bluffton High School are underway with work expected to begin in April. The Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District’s board approved a bid package for the improvement project for \$9,951,975 during Monday’s meeting.

The hard construction costs for the project account for \$9,495,990 of the total cost with \$455,985 allocated for what are termed “soft” construction costs.

Yates said that the next phase of the project will be a pre-construction meeting followed by improvement work to begin in April. Regular construction meetings and summary reports will be provided every month.

The district has also been working to finalize the layout and designs for the athletic facility before beginning work in May. Turf and track layouts were approved at the meeting. Yates noted that improvements are still in progress.

Yates also updated the board on the Our Town Safety Village project with hopes of work beginning in April.

“We’ve also been in coordination with Southern Wells,” Yates said. “There are students who are looking to build one of four structures on the premises. We did a sort of ‘Shark Tank’ in December where we evaluated the proposal from the students and then selected one of their options. City Hall will be constructed by Southern Wells students. We’re really excited about that opportunity.”

Yates said that materials have been purchased and will soon arrive on-site for students.

A long list of staffing changes was also approved on Monday.

Erin Roush will transfer from a third grade teacher to serves as the BHES assistant principal. Chad Grieser, a BHMSD employee for the past 17 years, will begin as the middle school assistant principal. Both positions take effect with the 2024-25 school year.

“I just want to say thank you so much,” Grieser said during the meeting. “It is an honor to be considered for the position. I also want to

thank Mr. Mettler and Mr. Harrold and the entire staff at the middle school.”

Over 21 additional positions were approved, as well as six resignations. Board President Bruce Holland acknowledged that the district needed to hire two additional speech language pathologists, as well as a bus driver and a custodian for the middle school.

The BHSMD 2024 Teacher of the Year, Jim Bueter, announced his retirement, effective at the end of the current school year.

“Mr. Jim Bueter will complete 26 years with Bluffton Harrison MSD as the director of bands,” Holland said. “He will be missed by staff and students and we wish him the best in his retirement year.”

The board also wished Bueter and BHS band students good luck in performing on Monday.

Though Bueter will not return for the upcoming school year, he was approved as the Instrumental Music Summer School teacher by the board Monday night.

In a separate motion, the board approved current middle school counselor Stephanie White as the new high school counselor, as well as the summer textbook coordinator.

The board also:  
• Scheduled Friday, May 24, for the graduation date for the Class of 2024. The ceremony will begin at 7:30 p.m.  
• Approved the first batch

of policy updates, which included 10 individual policies.

• Approved adopting and purchasing new materials for high school science courses.

• Approved a resolution to waive Indiana Code 20-30-2-3, which mandates 180 days of instructional days for students. The district will now petition the State Board of Education for approval. The request includes four professional development days throughout the 2024-25 school year. Yates mentioned that school

days are longer, which extends the total amount of instructional time for students in the district.

• Approved donations from 11 individuals and businesses for a total of \$7,598.52. Donations were designated to various sports teams, unpaid lunch accounts, and a field trip to the Shrine Circus for third graders.

• Extended congratulations to names for their qualification in the semi-state bowling competition in Fort Wayne.

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**GENERAC**

# Gaza residents staring at famine

**By WAFAA SHURFAFA, SAMY MAGDY and TIA GOLDENBERG**  
Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Famine is “imminent” in northern Gaza, where 70 percent of people are experiencing catastrophic hunger, according to a report Monday that warned escalation of the war could push half of Gaza’s total population to the brink of starvation.

The report, by the international community’s authority on determining the severity of hunger crises, came as Israel faces mounting pressure from even its closest allies to streamline the entry of aid into the Gaza Strip and to open more land crossings. Aid groups complain that deliveries by air and sea by the U.S. and other countries are too slow and too small.

The European Union’s top diplomat said the impending famine was “entirely manmade” as “starvation is used as a weapon of war.”

Israeli forces, meanwhile, launched another raid on the Gaza Strip’s largest hospital early Monday, saying Hamas militants had regrouped there and fired on them from inside the Shifa Hospital compound.

Clashes continued all day in and around the hospital, where Palestinian officials say tens of thousands of people have been sheltering.

The Israeli military said troops killed 20 people it identified as Hamas militants, and one of its own soldiers was killed, though the identification of the dead as militants could not be confirmed. Among those killed was a senior commander in

Gaza’s Hamas-led police forces who Israel said was hiding in the hospital. Gaza officials said the commander was coordinating protection of aid convoys.

The army last raided Shifa Hospital in November after claiming that Hamas maintained an elaborate command center within and beneath the facility. The military revealed a tunnel leading to some underground rooms, as well as weapons it said were found inside the hospital. But the evidence fell short of the earlier claims, and critics accused the army of recklessly endangering the lives of civilians.

The latest findings on hunger in Gaza came from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC, an initiative first set up in 2004 during the famine in Somalia that now includes more than a dozen U.N. agencies, aid groups, governments and other bodies to determine the severity of food insecurity.

It says virtually everyone in Gaza is struggling to get enough food, and that around 677,000 people — nearly a third of the population of 2.3 million — are experiencing the highest level of catastrophic hunger. That means they face extreme lack of food and critical levels of acute malnutrition. The figure includes around 210,000 people in the north.

Outright famine is projected to occur in the north anytime between now and May, it said. An area is considered to be in famine when 20% of households have an extreme lack of food, 30% of children suffer from acute malnutrition and

at least two adults or four children per every 10,000 people die daily.

The report said the first condition has been fulfilled, and it is “highly likely” the second has as well. The death rate is expected to accelerate and reach famine levels soon, it said.

The report warned that if Israel broadens its offensive to the packed southern city of Rafah, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to do, the fighting could drive over 1 million people — half of Gaza’s population — into catastrophic hunger and potentially cause famine in the south.

“This is the largest number of people facing imminent famine in the world today, and it has only taken five months to occur,” said Matthew Hollingworth, the acting World Food Program country director for the Palestinian territories.

Jamie McGoldrick, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories, called for “all roads” to be opened for aid, including into northern and central Gaza. The WFP report said aid from airdrops is “negligible” compared to what is brought on trucks.

Northern Gaza, including Gaza City, was the first target of the invasion, and entire neighborhoods have been obliterated. It is now the epicenter of Gaza’s humanitarian catastrophe, with many residents reduced to eating animal feed. At least 27 people, mostly children, have died from malnutrition and dehydration in the north, according to the Health Ministry.

A spokesman for the Israeli military body that

deals with Palestinian issues, Shimon Freeman, said Israel “places no limit on the amount of aid that can enter the Gaza Strip” and encourages countries to send aid. Israel has accused U.N. bodies of failing to distribute aid in a timely manner. Aid groups say distribution is impossible in much of Gaza because of hostilities, the difficulty of coordinating with the military and the breakdown of law and order.

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# More charges

(Continued from Page 3)

Allen was arrested in October 2022 and charged with murder in the 2017 slayings of 13-year-old Abigail Williams and 14-year-old Liberty German. He pleaded not guilty to the original murder charges.

Carroll County Prosecutor Nicholas McLeland said when he filed the amended charges in January that it “more accurately aligns the charging information with the cause’s discovery and probable cause affidavit.”

In addition to approving the new charges, Special Judge Fran Gull also ruled that all future hearings in the case will be held in Car-

roll County, other than jury selection on May 13. Some hearings have been held in Fort Wayne, where Gull is an Allen Superior Court judge.

A relative of one of the teenagers dropped them off on Feb. 13, 2017, at a hiking trail near their hometown of Delphi, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) northwest of Indianapolis. They were reported missing that evening after they didn’t show up at a meeting place where they had arranged to be picked up. Their bodies were found the next day in a rugged, heavily wooded area near the trail.

The killings have haunted

Delphi, a city of about 3,000 where Allen worked at a drugstore, and the case has been closely watched in the state and nationwide.

Gull issued a gag order in December 2022 barring attorneys, law enforcement officials, court personnel, the coroner and the girls’ family members from commenting on the case to the public or the media in any form, including social media.

Prosecutors had sought the order, citing intense public scrutiny and media attention. Gull was brought in as a special judge after a Carroll County judge recused himself.

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