

# The News - Banner

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FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2024 BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection \$1.00

## Vehicle catches fire in S.R. 116 crash

**By HOLLY GASKILL**  
 Three people were transported for medical attention after a vehicle fire Thursday afternoon.

At approximately 5 p.m., emergency responders were dispatched to State Road 116 and County Road 450 East in Bluffton on a report of a two-vehicle crash with one individual potentially inside a burning vehicle. At the scene, Bluffton Fire Chief Don Craig said both drivers and a passenger were stable and had been transported by Wells County EMS from the scene.

A witness stated the vehicles, a Jeep Cherokee and a

*(Continued on Page 2)*



After a collision with a Nissan Armada, the Jeep Cherokee pictured above crashed into a stop sign at the intersection of State Road 116 and County Road 450 East and caught fire. Pictured left, firefighters investigate the Nissan Armada, which came to rest on the opposite of the intersection. (Photos by Holly Gaskill)

## Local couple faces charges for corrupt business influence

**By SYDNEY KENT**  
 A husband and wife from Bluffton are facing felony-level charges for corrupt business influence after they were caught repeatedly stealing from Walmart.

On Jan. 18, Walmart Asset Protection reported a series of ongoing thefts using the "scan and go" system from several of their employees. The employees were identified as Brett and Morgan Rowles.

Brett Allen Rowles, 28, is charged with one count of corrupt business influence, a Level 5 felony, and 23 counts of theft, all Class A misdemeanors. His bond is set at \$30,500.

Morgan Marie Rowles, 24, is charged with one count of corrupt business influence, a Level 5 felony, and 22 counts of theft, all Class A misdemeanors. She posted bond last week.

Both parties entered preliminary pleas of not guilty.

In a probable cause affidavit, over 20 incidents were described where the couple would place items in their cart, only scanning a portion of the items. On several occasions, the couple had children with them.

The dates on the charges begin in October, with the most recent crime of theft allegedly occurring in January. The Bluffton Walmart requested restitution for a total of \$3,881.69 worth of stolen items.

Morgan Rowles is scheduled for a pretrial conference in the matter at 1 p.m. on Aug. 7 in the Wells Circuit Court.

Brett Rowles is scheduled for a bail review hearing at 9 a.m. on July 17 in the Wells Circuit Court.

*sydney@news-banner.com*

## Biden attempts to confront Trump at debate but stirs anxiety about his candidacy

ATLANTA (AP) — A raspy and sometimes halting President Joe Biden repeatedly sought to confront Donald Trump in their first debate ahead of the November election, as his Republican rival countered Biden's criticism by leaning into falsehoods about the economy, illegal immigration and his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection.

Biden's uneven performance crystallized the concerns of many Americans that, at age 81, he is too old to serve as president. It sparked a fresh round of calls for the Democrat to step aside.

Meanwhile, the 78-year-old Trump's rhetoric offered Americans an unwelcome reminder of the bombast he launched daily during his tumultuous four years in office, as he struggles to win over skeptical voters. He declined to clearly state he would accept the results of the November election, four years after he promoted conspiracy theories

about his loss that culminated in the Jan. 6 insurrection.

Biden repeatedly tore into Trump in personal terms in an apparent effort to provoke him, bringing up everything from the former president's recent felony conviction to his alleged insult of World War I veterans to his weight and golf game. But his halting delivery from the beginning of the debate drew the most attention immediately afterward. Trump's allies immediately declared victory while prominent Democrats publicly questioned whether Biden could move forward.

"I think there was a sense of shock, actually, of how he came out at the beginning of this debate, how his voice sounded. He seemed a little disoriented. He did get stronger as the debate went on but by that time, I think the panic had set in," said David Axelrod, a longtime advisor to former President

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## Ruling against Healthy Indiana Plan jeopardizes program

**By WHITNEY DOWNARD and CASEY SMITH**  
**Indiana Capital Chronicle**

A program providing hundreds of thousands of Hoosiers health insurance could be in jeopardy after a Washington D.C. judge on Thursday vacated a federal approval for the Healthy Indiana Plan.

Chief Judge James E. Boasberg, of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, found fault with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' 2020 approval of various aspects of HIP 2.0 — including POWER Accounts and the lack of retroactive coverage.

Former Gov. Mitch Daniels first introduced the consumer-driven, cost-sharing approach in 2007 when the state expanded Medicaid to moderate income workers. Gov. Mike Pence developed the program even further.

The full extent of the ruling was unclear Thursday night and a spokesperson with

the Family and Social Services Administration said the agency was reviewing the ruling. POWER Accounts, a sort of premium for Medicaid enrollees above a certain income threshold, have been paused since the COVID-19 pandemic started in 2020 but were set to restart for HIP's 762,276 beneficiaries on July 1.

Earlier this month, FSSA said in a statement that state law requires the agency to charge for a POWER Account contribution, a claim it repeated in the legal battle. Striking the POWER Accounts could therefore unravel the whole HIP program, the state argued.

Boasberg disagreed.

"Because Plaintiffs — like all members of the expansion population — derive their eligibility for Medicaid through Indiana's state plan ... they would remain Medicaid eligible even if the Secretary's 2020 approval is vacated, unless and until the State takes

*(Continued on Page 2)*



**Summer construction**

There was a fierce competition to construct the tallest "paper skyscraper" Thursday at the Bluffton City Gym. The victors' tower, shown above, measured at 10 ft. 2 in. tall. The winning team consisted of (pictured left to right) Viktor Arnold, Liam Howe, Rayne Smith, Daniel Norman and Annabelle Norman. The second place team, shown left, put up a fair fight and clocked in at 10 ft. 2 in. when the structure was supported. Pictured at left are the architects, Aaron Smith, Jenna Norman, Aiden Howe, Gwen Norman, Korbin Fritts and Isaac Smith. Their tower is also shown below, unsupported. (Photos by Holly Gaskill)

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**Outside**

Sunny and warm today, rain tonight and Saturday

Today	Saturday	Sunday
High 85	High 86	High 77
Low 70	Low 66	Low 53

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# Biden, Trump debate

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Barack Obama, said on CNN immediately after. “And I think you’re going to hear discussions that, I don’t know will lead to anything, but there are going to be discussions about whether he should continue.”

Said Van Jones, another Democratic strategist, on CNN: “He did not do well at all.”

David Plouffe, Obama’s former campaign manager, described the debate on MSNBC as a “DEFCON1” moment for Democrats.

Biden began the night with a raspy voice and a halting delivery as he tried to defend his economic record and criticize Trump. A person familiar with the matter said Biden was suffering from a cold during the debate, adding that he tested negative for COVID-19.

Biden appeared to lose his train of thought while giving one answer, drifting from an answer on tax policy to health policy, at one point using the word “COVID,” and then saying, “excuse me, with, dealing with,” and he trailed off again.

“Look, we finally beat Medicare,” Biden said, as his time ran out on his answer.

Biden began to give clearer answers as the debate progressed, still with a rasp, and attacked Trump’s record on issues like fighting climate change.

“The only existential threat to humanity is climate change, and he didn’t do a damn thing about it,” he said.

The current president and his predecessor hadn’t spoken since their last debate weeks before the 2020 presidential election. Trump skipped Biden’s inauguration after leading an unprecedented and unsuccessful effort to overturn his loss that culminated in the Capitol riot by his supporters.

Trump equivocated on whether he would accept the results of the November election, saying he would accept them if the vote was “fair” and “legal,” repeating his baseless claims of widespread fraud and misconduct in his 2020 loss to Biden that he still denies.

Pressed on his actions on Jan. 6, 2021, Trump was unapologetic.

“On Jan. 6, we were respected all over the world, all over the world we were respected. And then he comes in and we’re now laughed at,” Trump said.

After he was prompted by a moderator to answer whether he violated his oath of office that day by rallying his supporters seeking to block the certification of Biden’s Electoral College victory and not acting for hours to call them off as they raided the Capitol, Trump sought to blame then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Biden said Trump encouraged the supporters to go to the Capitol and sat in the White House without taking action as they fought with police officers.

“He didn’t do a damn thing and these people should be in jail,” Biden said. “They should be the ones that are being held accountable. And he wants to let them all out. And now he says that if he loses again, such a whiner that he is, that this could be a ‘bloodbath.’”

Trump then defended the people convicted and imprisoned for their role in the insurrection, saying to Biden, “What they’ve done to some people that are so innocent, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.”

Trump and Biden entered the night facing stiff headwinds, including a public weary of the tumult of partisan politics and broadly dissatisfied with both, according to polling. But the debate was highlighting how they have

## A look at some of the false claims made during Biden, Trump’s first debate

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
ECONOMY

TRUMP: We had the greatest economy in history.”

THE FACTS: That’s not accurate. First of all, the pandemic triggered a massive recession during his presidency. The government borrowed \$3.1 trillion in 2020 to stabilize the economy. Trump had the ignominy of leaving the White House with fewer jobs than when he entered.

But even if you take out issues caused by the pandemic, economic growth averaged 2.67% during Trump’s first three years. That’s pretty solid. But it’s nowhere near the 4% averaged during Bill Clinton’s two terms from 1993 to 2001, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. In fact, growth has been stronger so far under Biden than under Trump.

Trump did have the unemployment rate get as low as 3.5% before the pandemic. But again, the labor force participation rate for people 25 to 54 — the core of the U.S. working population — was higher under Clinton. The participation rate has also been higher under Biden than Trump.

Trump also likes to talk about how low inflation was under him. Gasoline fell as low as \$1.77 a gallon. But, of course, that price dip happened during pandemic lockdowns when few people were driving. The low prices were due to a global health crisis, not Trump’s policies.

Similarly, average 30-year mortgage rates dipped to 2.65% during the pandemic. Those low rates were a byproduct of Federal Reserve efforts to prop up a weak economy, rather than the sign of strength that Trump now suggests it was.

ABORTION

TRUMP: “The problem they have is they’re radical because they will take the life of a child in the eighth month, the ninth month, and even after birth, after birth.”

THE FACTS: Trump inaccurately referred to abortions after birth. Infanticide is criminalized in every state, and no state has passed a law that allows killing a baby after birth.

Abortion rights advocates say terms like this and “late-term abortions” attempt to stigmatize abortions later in pregnancy. Abortions later in pregnancy are exceedingly rare. In 2020, less than 1% of abortions in the United States were performed at or after 21 weeks, according to the Centers for Disease Con-

trol and Prevention.

Abortions later in pregnancy also are usually the result of serious complications, such as fetal anomalies, that put the life of the woman or fetus at risk, medical experts say. In most cases, these are also wanted pregnancies, experts say.

COVID-19

BIDEN: Trump told Americans to “inject bleach” into their arms to treat COVID-19.

THE FACTS: That’s overstating it. Rather, Trump asked whether it would be possible to inject disinfectant into the lungs.

“And then I see the disinfectant, where it knocks it out in one minute,” he said at an April 2020 press conference. “And is there a way we can do something like that, by injection inside or almost a cleaning, because you see it gets in the lungs and it does a tremendous number on the lungs, so it’d be interesting to check that, so that you’re going to have to use medical doctors with, but it sounds interesting to me. So, we’ll see, but the whole concept of the light, the way it kills it in one minute. That’s pretty powerful.”

MIGRANTS

TRUMP, referring to Biden: “He’s the one that killed people with a bad border and flooding hundreds of thousands of people dying and also killing our citizens when they come in.”

THE FACTS: A mass influx of migrants coming into the U.S. illegally across the southern border has led to a number of false and misleading claims by Trump. For example, he regularly claims other countries are emptying their prisons and mental institutions to send to the U.S. There is no evidence to support that.

Trump has also argued the influx of immigrants is causing a crime surge in the U.S., although statistics actually show violent crime is on the way down.

There have been recent high-profile and heinous crimes allegedly committed by people in the country illegally. But FBI statistics do not separate out crimes by the immigration status of the assailant, nor is there any evidence of a spike in crime perpetrated by migrants, either along the U.S.-Mexico border or in cities seeing the greatest influx of migrants, like New York. Studies have found that people living in the country illegally are less likely than native-born Americans to have been arrested for violent, drug and property crimes.

sharply different visions on virtually every core issue — abortion, the economy and foreign policy — and deep hostility toward each other.

Their personal animus quickly came to the surface. Biden got personal in evoking his son, Beau, who served in Iraq before dying of brain cancer. The president criticized Trump for reportedly calling Americans killed in battle “suckers and losers.” Biden told Trump, “My son was not a loser, was not a sucker. You’re the sucker. You’re the loser.”

Trump said he never said that — a line attributed to Trump by his former chief of staff — and slammed Biden for the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, calling it “the

most embarrassing day in the history of our country’s life.”

Trump himself agreed to the withdrawal with the Taliban a year before he left office.

Biden directly mentioned Trump’s conviction in the New York hush money trial, saying, “You have the morals of an alley cat,” and referencing the allegations in the case that Trump had sex with a porn actress.

Trump retorted that Biden could face criminal charges “when he leaves office,” evoking his familiar threats of retribution. Though there is no evidence of any wrongdoing, Trump said, “Joe could be a convicted felon with all the things that he’s done.”

# Weather

Friday, June 28, 2024

(24-hour observations at 11:49 p.m. Thursday at the Fort Wayne International Airport)

High: 78; Low: 59; Precipitation: None  
Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 1.72 feet at 8:45 p.m. Thursday

## Wells County forecast

**Today:** Partly sunny, with a high near 85. Southeast wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Tonight:** A slight chance of showers, then a chance of showers and thunderstorms after 2 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 70. South wind around 5 mph. Chance of precipitation is 50%.

**Saturday:** A chance of showers and thunderstorms before 8 a.m., then showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m., then a chance of showers and thunderstorms after 2 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 86. Southwest wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph. Chance of precipitation is 70%. New rainfall amounts between a quarter and half of an inch possible.

**Saturday Night:** A 30% chance of showers before 8 p.m. Partly cloudy, with a low around 66. West wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Sunday:** Sunny, with a high near 77.

**Sunday Night:** Clear, with a low around 53.

**Monday:** Sunny, with a high near 77.

**Monday Night:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 55.

**Tuesday:** Mostly sunny, with a high near 85.

**Tuesday Night:** A 30% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 69.

**Wednesday:** A 50% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly sunny and hot, with a high near 90.

**Wednesday Night:** A chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 68.

**Independence Day:** A chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly sunny, with a high near 87.

## S.R. 116 crash

(Continued from Page 1)

Nissan Armada, had collided in the intersection as one had tried to turn. The Jeep Cherokee then reportedly collided with the stop sign at 450 E and caught fire. The Armada came to a rest at the other side of the intersection. An official accident

report is pending.

Roadways were promptly closed as the Bluffton Fire Department and law enforcement responded to the scene. Traffic was held at S.R. 116 and 450E and resumed after approximately 20 minutes.

holly@news-banner.com

## Justice Department charges nearly 200 people in \$2.7B health care fraud schemes

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly 200 people have been charged in a sweeping nationwide crackdown on health care fraud schemes with false claims topping \$2.7 billion, the Justice Department said on Thursday.

Attorney General Merrick Garland announced the charges against doctors, nurse practitioners and others across the U.S. accused of a variety of scams, including a \$900 million scheme in Arizona targeting dying patients.

“It does not matter if you are a trafficker in a drug cartel or a corporate executive or medical professional employed by a health care company,” Garland told reporters. “If you profit from the unlawful distribution of controlled substances, you will be held accountable.”

In the Arizona case, prosecutors have accused two owners of wound care companies of accepting more than \$330 million in kickbacks as part of a scheme to fraudulently bill Medicare for amniotic wound grafts, which are dressings to help heal wounds.

Nurse practitioners were pressured to apply the wound grafts to elderly patients who didn’t need them, including people in hospice care, the Justice Department said. Some patients died the day they received the grafts or within days, court papers say.

In less than two years, more than \$900 million in bogus claims were submitted to Medicare for grafts that were used on fewer than 500 patients, prosecutors said.

The owners of the wound care companies, Alexandra Gehrke and Jeffrey King, were arrested this month at the Phoenix airport as they were boarding a flight to London, according to court papers urging a judge to keep them behind bars while they await trial. An attorney for Gehrke declined to comment, and a lawyer for King didn’t immediately respond to an email from The Associated Press.

## Healthy Indiana Plan

(Continued from Page 1)

additional action to terminate their coverage,” he wrote.

Risks to coverage

HIP offers a two-tiered plan to all non-disabled adults in Indiana with incomes at or below 138% of the federal poverty level. It restricts coverage, however, in several ways, including by charging monthly income-based premiums and offering no retroactive coverage.

The judge pointed to data showing that premiums have “threatened” coverage for thousands of Hoosiers.

For example, between February 2015 and November 2016, almost 10,000 individuals with incomes above 100% the FPL were disenrolled from HIP Plus for nonpayment of their premiums, and another almost 4,000 were disenrolled from HIP Basic for the same reason, according to data from various evaluations of HIP 2.0 cited by Boasberg.

During that same period, an additional nearly 48,000 Hoosiers were found eligible for HIP 2.0 but never enrolled because they did not make their first premium payment, Boasberg said.

“In other words, nearly 60,000 Hoosiers — a whopping 29% of all Hoosiers

subject to premiums — were disenrolled from or never enrolled in HIP 2.0 because of non-payment,” he wrote. “And over half of all beneficiaries, or 324,840 Indiana residents, who were required to pay premiums missed at least one payment in 2015–16.”

Loss of coverage continued between 2017 and 2018 when 26,037 HIP Plus enrollees were disenrolled for failure to pay, according to Boasberg’s citations.

Case background

Three Hoosier plaintiffs utilizing HIP sued HHS over its approval of POWER Accounts and work requirements as well as state rules barring retroactive coverage and blocking payments for non-emergency medical transport. The judge ruled in favor of those three plaintiffs — though work requirements under HIP had previously been struck by the Biden Administration.

An example of retroactive coverage in action could be someone with no health insurance seeking emergency care and later learning they qualify for HIP. Once approved for the government insurance program, HIP will go back and cover health expenses for a set number of months and potentially

pay for that emergency visit. Such a provision is allowed under Indiana’s other Medicaid health plans and for pregnant women using HIP.

The state also pays for non-emergency medical transport, such as a doctor’s visit, for other health care programs but not for those enrolled in HIP.

Plaintiffs, represented by the Indiana Justice Project, noted that even HHS seemed uncertain about the benefit of POWER Account premiums in a December 2023 letter giving the state final approval.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services ultimately allowed the state to pursue the cost-sharing tool over its own objections in order not to derail the unwinding process.

Boasberg also questioned this decision, noting that POWER Accounts hadn’t been used since 2020 and reversing the approval wouldn’t be disruptive.

The judge seemed to suggest the state of Indiana could continue the program but without the premiums.

“It is far from clear why retaining the status quo — (namely) declining to charge beneficiaries premiums and impose associated penalties

— would result in beneficiaries being inadvertently disenrolled.”

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OBITUARIES

Hankford "Hank" Osborn, 88

Hankford "Hank" H. Osborn, 88, of Ossian, passed away Wednesday afternoon, June 26, 2024, at his residence.



Hank was born in Hope, Arkansas, on Aug. 5, 1935, to Rufus J. and Georgia (Davis) Osborn. He married Dixie Brickley in Fort Wayne on July 2, 1960. She survives in Ossian.

Hank was a truck driver for Supervalu Corporation in Fort Wayne for 48 years. He was a social person, who enjoyed shooting pool, drinking coffee and chatting with those around him, and loved dogs and "them dogs loved ole dad."

Survivors include three sons Jeff (Linda) Osborn of Bluffton, Brian Osborn of Bluffton, and Chad (Jennifer) Osborn of Ossian; a daughter, Penny Gibson of Ossian; and four grandchildren, Brandon Freeman, Quinn Gibson, Ethan Osborn and Jenna Osborn.

In addition to his parents, Hank was preceded in death by four siblings, Ed, Francis, Paul and Deloris, and a son-in-law, Steven Gibson.

Per Hank's wishes there will be no public services at this time.

Memorial contributions in memory of Hank may be directed to the Ossian Fire Department.

Online condolences can be made at [www.goodwin-caleaharnish.com](http://www.goodwin-caleaharnish.com).

Goodwin - Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel have been entrusted with funeral arrangements.

Carolyn Wehner, 85

Carolyn Rose Wehner, 85, of Bluffton, passed away Wednesday morning, June 26, 2024, at Lutheran Hospital in Fort Wayne.

Carolyn was born Sept. 16, 1938, in Bluffton, to Frank and Ethel (Gentis) Neff, both parents preceded her in death. She married Robert "Keith" Wehner on July 27, 1958, he survives in Bluffton.

In addition to her husband of 65 years, she is survived by four children, Tammy (Craig) Wolfcale of Bluffton, Gayle (Mark) Foglesong of Mountain Home, Idaho, Lisa Joann Wehner of Spokane, Wash., and Jim (Jolyn) Wehner of Atlanta; 14 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.

In addition to Carolyn's parents, she was preceded in death by two siblings, Ned Neff and Phyllis Wolfcale.

In accordance with Carolyn's wishes, there will be no public services at this time. A celebration of life service will be held later this summer. Burial will take place at a later date.

Goodwin - Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel have been entrusted with funeral arrangements.

Hoosiers see slightly lower food prices for July 4 cookout

By MIA HILKOWITZ, Indiana Capital Chronicle

Indiana residents will pay an average of \$68.33 for a summer cookout feeding 10 people — a 2% decrease from last year — according to the 2024 Indiana Farm Bureau summer market basket survey results released Wednesday. This rounds out to approximately \$6.83 per person.

Although the \$68.33 price tag of the cookout decreased from last year, food costs in Indiana are still significantly higher than costs in 2021 (\$56.70) and 2022 (\$64.32).

The INFB conducts the annual survey in conjunction with the American Farm Bureau Federation's national survey. This year's results indicate Indiana's prices are 4% or 29 cents less per person than the average U.S. prices.

While inflation has slightly cooled nationwide, high interest rates and prices have generally curbed consumer spending in recent months. Janis Highley, second vice president of the INFB, said part of the reason the Indiana consumers may see lower costs at a grocery store or farmers market compared to restaurants is because there are lower overhead costs.

"There is a little glimmer of hope out there for us," Highley told the Capital Chronicle. "Cooking at home, and these farmers markets and just farmers in general were resilient. And the good healthy food that we can provide for the consumers — this really shines a light on that."

Which items saw price changes?

Costs for a 10-person summer cookout reached an all-time high in 2023, with the average total meal price reaching \$69.48, according to data from the INFB. Todd Davis, chief economist for the INFB, said inflation for the cost of food purchased at grocery stores has been slower than the overall inflation for the economy.

Indiana's prices are on par with prices for other Midwest states. Davis said the general location of Indiana helps keep the costs for consumers low.

"Indiana and the Midwest is at the heart of where a lot of food is produced, and if it's not produced here, it's nearby," Davis said. "We're the crossroads of the nation. And so logistically, our costs are lower than if you are on the east or west coast."

The survey includes the cost of 12 items; ground beef, cheese, cookies, ice cream, strawberries, chips, chicken breast, pork chops, pork and beans, hamburger buns, lemonade and potato salad.

While the overall cost of a cookout decreased, some items — specifically proteins — saw increases. The price of ground beef increased 14% from last year to \$13.88, a cost 9% higher than the U.S. average cost. Costs for pork chops also increased by 64 cents.

The cost of hamburger buns, lemonade, potato salad and strawberries also increased from last year.

"Even though we are in the Midwest, I think we're still seeing recovery from COVID," Highley said. "With these interest rates and the supply and demand, what is available, even in the Midwest, we really do feel that pinch"

Prices for cookies, cheese, ice cream, chips and chicken breasts decreased from 2023.

The INFB conducts the survey in June by having volunteer shoppers look for prices on specific food items at their local grocery stores. These shoppers look for the best possible prices and do not use special coupons or purchase deals. However, Davis said it's important to look at the survey results as "a snapshot in time of what shoppers experienced on a certain day" in June.

Impact on farmers

Highley, whose family are corn and soybean farmers in Northeast Indiana, said that high costs don't necessarily mean farmers see higher profits.

"If you envision a \$1 bill, 15 cents out of that goes back to the farmer himself," Highley said. "The rest of it goes into transportation, production, what have you. But input costs continue to be relatively high on our farm."

An Investigate Midwest analysis found that Midwestern states saw the combined loss of around 30,000 farms from 2017 to 2022 as many farms were consolidated or went out of business.

Police Notebook

INCIDENTS

City:

Tuesday, 5:47 p.m., East Spring Street and Stogdill Road. Report of animals running in the roadway.

Tuesday, 9:38 p.m., North Main Street and North Sutton Circle Drive. Driver cited for suspended license.

Tuesday, 10:42 p.m., Pak A Sak North. Sport of man inside store possibly intoxicated.

Wednesday, 7:35 a.m., Wells County Swimming Pool. Report of someone jumping fence and breaking into shed, smell of marijuana.

Wednesday, 10:25 a.m., 300 block of White Bridge Court. Report of a marketplace sale issue.

Wednesday, 12:48 p.m., Walmart. Report of trespassing.

Wednesday, 1:41 p.m., S.R. 201. Driver cited for expired plates.

Wednesday, 3 p.m., 800

block of South Marion Street. Report of a limb in the roadway. The tree kind not the people kind.

Wednesday, 7:45 p.m., West South and South Oak streets. Report of harassment.

Wednesday, 7:56 p.m., 600 block of West Market Street. Report of 7-8 juveniles breaking into apartment building. Kids were in the lobby.

Wednesday, 8:17 p.m., 1200 block of Lancaster Street. Caller reported a missing three-year-old and her mother were possibly at this location.

Thursday, 10:19 a.m., McDonald's. Driver cited for distracted driving.

Thursday, 11:37 a.m., Wells Community Boys and Girls Club. Report of an SUV parked in front of club, subject with tattoos and sleeveless.

Thursday, 12:52 p.m., 700 block of South Johnson Street. Caller reported neigh-

bor upset, cat ran over.

Thursday, 1:39 p.m., 200 block of West Market Street. Report of bullet hole in business front window.

County: Wednesday, 10:49 p.m., 60 block of West Washington Street, Poneto. Caller reported neighbor's dog loose.

Wednesday, 11:40 p.m., S.R. 3 and S.R. 18, Montpelier. Officer struck animal on way to transport subject to jail. No issues.

Thursday, 12:10 a.m., S.R. 116 and East 300 South, Bluffton. Car versus deer.

Thursday, 1:35 a.m., Pak A Sak North, Bluffton. Driver cited for operating with suspended license.

Thursday, 5:48 a.m., South 300 West and West 200 South, Liberty Center. Driver cited for speeding 45 in a 30 mph zone.

Thursday, 9:53 a.m., Wells County Courthouse. Harold Reed, a man recently con-

victed on intimidation and child molesting charges, sent a letter to the Superior Court including the message, "MY FATHER SATIN SAID IT YOU VALU YOUR SANITY YOU WILL OVERTURN MY CONVICTION."

Ossian: Wednesday, 2:23 p.m., Silo Farms. Welfare check requested not showing up for counseling, no contact made.

Wednesday, 2:59 p.m., 8200 North 750 East, Ossian. Caller reported two dogs leaving property.

ARRESTS Alfredo Infante-Briceno, 46, Bluffton; operating without financial responsibility. Class C misdemeanor. Booked and released.

Kenneth Edward Boyer, 42, Bluffton; invasion of privacy, a Level 6 felony. Bond set at \$25,000.

Glen Allen Tighe, 33, Gas City; contempt of court — civil. Bond set at \$1,000.



Shown in photo from left cutting the ribbon with Chamber ambassadors, Wells County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Erin Prible, Chad Walker, Lindsey Garber, Alyssa Hicks and Kari Nickerson of Fast Pace and Alyssa Brown of Archbold & Lewis. (Photo submitted)

Fast Pace Health Walk-In Clinic opens in Bluffton

The Wells County Chamber of Commerce staff and ambassadors welcomed Fast Pace Health with a ribbon cutting celebration. Fast Pace opened a new walk-in urgent care clinic at 1010 North Main Street in Bluffton on June 17. Fast Pace Health will be open seven days a week with extended weekday and weekend hours for current residents and surrounding Wells County communities.

"The clinic will feature multiple exam rooms, an on-site lab, COVID-19 testing, and x-ray capabilities. Patients can also take advantage of virtual telehealth for urgent care common ailments as well as medication prescriptions and refills.

"Our mission to improve the health of those we serve

remains true, and we aim to bring that commitment of providing a comfortable, stress-free, and professional health care experience to Bluffton. Our staff of experienced clinicians will provide comprehensive health services that meet the needs of the community ... We have built our name and reputation on our compassionate, reliable, and affordable approach to health care with services that can be scarce in smaller communities," said Fast Pace Health CEO Greg Steil.

The clinic will offer treatment for a wide range of illnesses with walk-in urgent, primary, and preventative health care services. Fast Pace Health also offers scheduled services for behavioral, telehealth, and occupational health

care needs.

The Bluffton location is part of an expanding Fast Pace network of clinics established in over 250 plus communities across Tennessee, Kentucky, Mis-

issippi, Indiana, Alabama and Louisiana. More information about Fast Pace Health is available at: <https://fastpacehealth.com/location/bluffton-in-urgent-care/>

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Indiana Democrats to attend White House gun violence meeting

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ, Indiana Capital Chronicle

Three Hoosier lawmakers — Democrats serving in Indiana's House of Representatives — will attend a White House convention dedicated to gun violence prevention on Wednesday.

They are Reps. Maureen Bauer of South Bend, Carey Hamilton of Indianapolis and Ragen Hatcher of Gary.

"These legislators were invited to this conference for their dedication to preventing gun violence in their communities and across the state," the Indiana House Democratic Caucus noted in a news release.

They'll join state lawmakers from across the country at President Joe Biden's Safer States Legislative Convening. It's set to feature talks from senior White House officials and state leaders, along with breakout group discussions.

The Biden administration convened healthcare executives, leaders, practitioners and service providers on the topic earlier this month.

June is National Gun Violence Awareness Month.

It isn't the first time to the White House for the lawmakers. In June 2023, Hamilton joined lawmakers from across the country at a White House discussion of state-level child care policy. Hatcher and Bauer also attended a December 2023 gun prevention meeting with the Biden-Harris administration.

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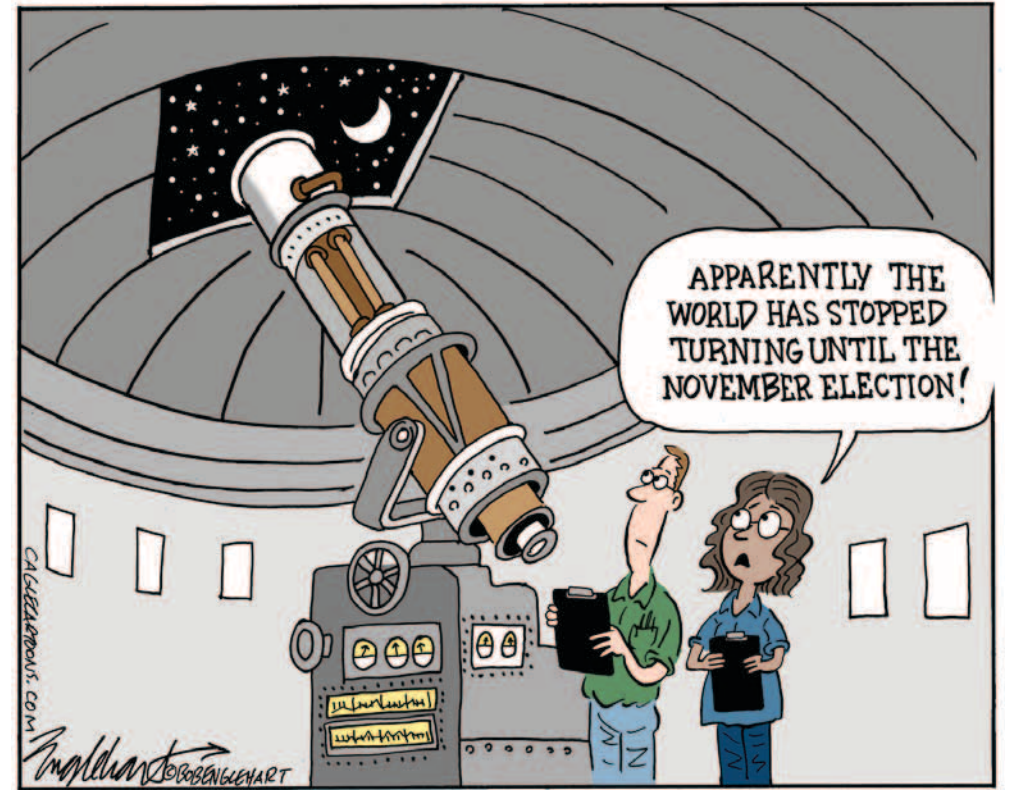
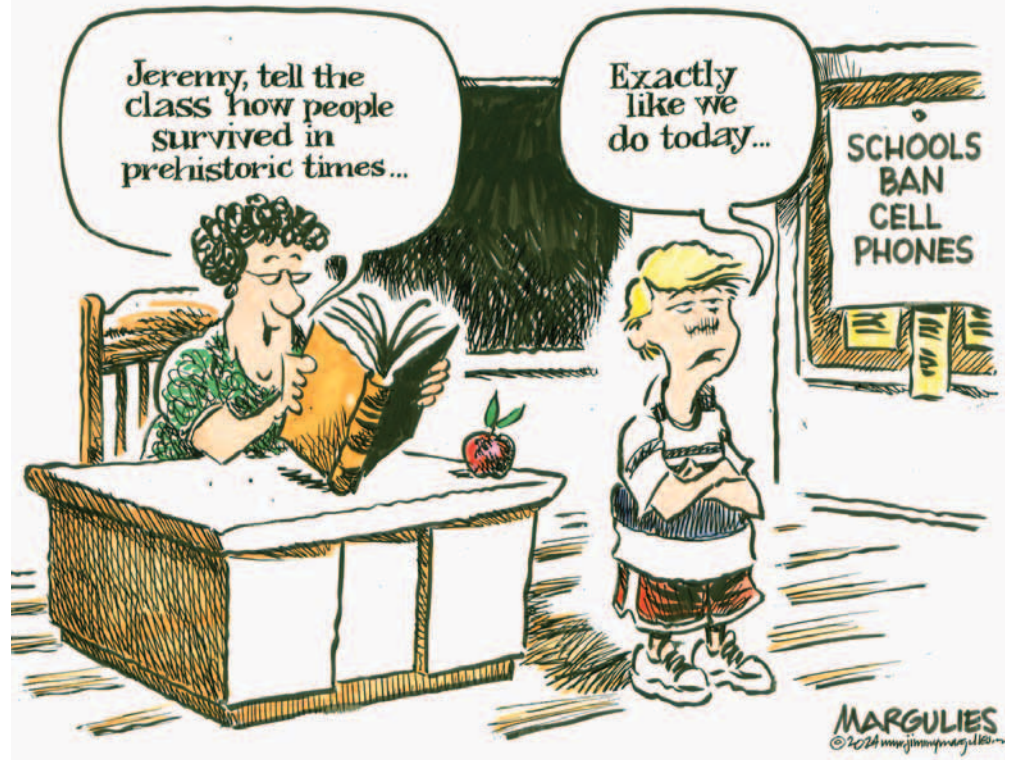
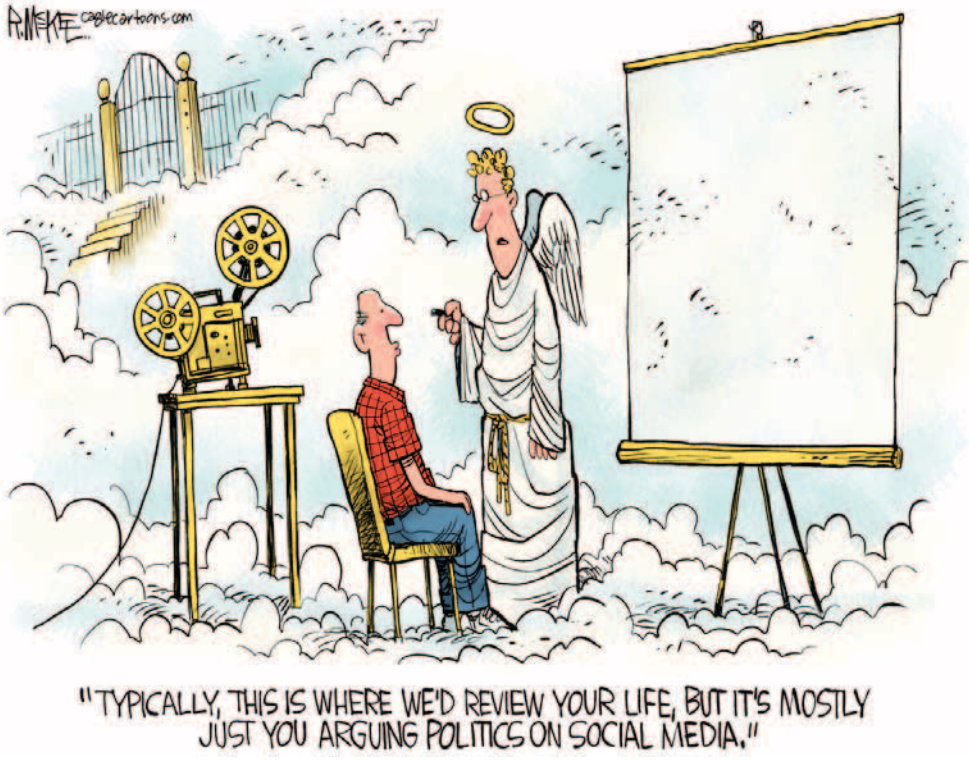
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The Week That Was - a look back through cartoonists' eyes...



Other Opinions

Pushing unions on a federal contractor

The contractor that runs call centers for Medicare, as well as the federal ObamaCare marketplace, isn't even two years into a nine-year deal, so why is the Department of Health and Human Services accepting new proposals this week? The answer seems to be that the Biden Administration wants to push more than 10,000 workers into a union.

HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said late last year he intended to redo the contract, this time with a "labor harmony requirement." Notices of intent to compete for the job are due June 21, and the department plans to announce the winner by Jan. 16, 2025, four days before the next presidential inauguration. The current contractor, Maximus, gets good ratings, but Mr. Becerra cited the need to ensure "continuity of operations." The insinuation is that some kind of labor dispute could leave 1-800-MEDICARE with a busy signal.

This concern is baseless, the company says. "Maximus has only experienced five brief labor-related demonstrations since 2018, and all were sparsely attended," it told HHS in a letter last month. "Barely 1 percent of the Maximus workforce has participated in any given demonstration," and "many of the participants were paid by the union." Meanwhile, "our Customer Satisfaction scores averaged 95.6 percent across those five demonstrations."

Maximus won the current deal in September 2022, after almost three years of HHS procurement work. The contract is renewable annually for nine years, and it's worth \$6.6 billion. In the last year the company answered about 30 million Medicare and ObamaCare calls. Its employees working on the contract, up to 13,000, are based in right-to-work states: Arizona, Florida, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, Texas and Virginia.

The HHS request for proposal says a "labor harmony agreement," at minimum, prohibits work stoppages. In exchange, though, unions could seek such concessions as access to workers or the ability to unionize via "card check" instead of a secret ballot. Under HHS's terms, negotiations would be required when a union "demonstrates intent to represent service employees performing work under this contract." Then an executive labor harmony agreement is due in 120 days.

Consider the leverage this gives labor organizers. Any union that "demonstrates intent" to organize Medicare call centers, even if most employees disagree, can use the threat of breach of contract to demand negotiations. What if the union makes unreasonable demands?

Maximus has argued to HHS that this is a wrong turn. Adding unions could frustrate performance by making call centers less flexible and adaptive. The broad language in the HHS document leaves many questions unanswered, so it isn't clear how this is supposed to work in practice. Maximus's letter last month also says the mandate for a labor harmony agreement is "contrary to law."

The point of contracting is to serve taxpayers, yet HHS is subordinating this goal to a union agenda. "I've been around this business for almost half a century now, and I've never seen this kind of action with this kind of intent," David Berteau, CEO of the Professional Services Council trade group, said recently. "It's done without cause. There's no reason for it other than to insert a labor harmony agreement into the existing work."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
Distributed by The Associated Press

Some good reasons for partisan perceptions about the economy

Several readers objected to my recent column about economic illiteracy colliding with feelings about today's booming economy. I was tempted to quote a pithy bumper sticker about the relevance of feelings, but this is a family publication.

Instead, I'll simply say, your emotions offer a poor epistemological approach to understanding macroeconomic fluctuations.

Nationwide, it is unambiguously clear that the U.S. economy is performing historically well. On every important measure—employment, wages, GDP, or wealth—the overall economy is not just performing at record levels, but also outperforming the rest of the world.

Robust national economic performance has benefits for every county and small town, but that does not mean every place shares equally in economic growth. There are plenty of places that continue to do poorly.

Many places are doing very, very poorly.

There are two phenomena around differences in economic performance of states and counties. The first is that the gap is growing. Rich places are, for the most part, getting richer and poor places poorer. This is in stark contrast to most of the nation's history, in which state and local economies became more alike rather than diverging in wealth and opportunity.

The second phenomenon is a growing political divide between rich and poor places. This will shock many folks, but poor places are increasingly governed by Republicans and rich places by Democrats. The gap between rich and poor places might help explain the partisan differences in perceptions of the economy.

The regional differences are compelling across dimensions of rural and urban places, as well as between cities and rural areas.

The rural-urban income gap is more than 2 percent larger than it was a decade ago, with rural workers earning only 75 cents for every dollar earned by urban workers. Poor economic conditions in rural America are nothing new, but they aren't fueled by national economic conditions. Many of the problems of rural America are related to state, rather than national, conditions.

The 10 poorest rural areas are all in solidly Republican states. Only half of the 10 richest rural places are in Republican states.

There is a rural-urban divide in politics, with GOP-leaning rural places doing worse than Democrat-leaning urban places. There is also a gap between the political leanings of the poorest and richest rural parts of each state that distinctly disfavors GOP states.

The GOP has a firm electoral lock on poor, rural places. There is considerable evidence that decades of ineffective state policies have helped immiserate rural places in many states. But, again, the political divides are newer than the policy failings. So, which party is responsible for those poor policies will vary state by state. Indiana is the median state in terms of rural affluence.

We are a nation of city dwellers, with 8 out of 10 Americans living in metropolitan counties. The six most affluent metro areas have per capita incomes more than double the rural county average. As with rural places, there are big regional divides in urban

affluence.

Rich cities are mostly a blue-state characteristic. Of the top 25 richest metro areas in the country, as measured by per capita income, only five are in solidly GOP states. Three are in Texas and two in Florida.

Only three of the 25 poorest metro areas are in Democratic-controlled states. California has two of them and Michigan one. The Chicago area, which includes parts of Indiana, ranks 32nd and Indianapolis is the 49th-richest metropolitan area in the nation.

Indiana's worst-performing city, I am sad to report, is Muncie. It ranks 353rd out of 385 in per capita income. Poor cities are mostly a red-state characteristic.

It is difficult to lay the blame for worsening economic conditions at the feet of one party or the other. For the past 50 years, there was considerable overlap in state policies, so conservative Democratic states behaved a lot like more progressive Republican states in tax, education and economic development policy.

However, today there is a growing understanding that differences in economic outcomes are mostly connected to differences in educational attainment between places. Other factors, like tax rates, tax structure, regulatory environment or economic development policy, are of declining importance.

I would go even farther in concluding that differences in tax policies explain almost none of the differences in affluence or growth. That is a major departure from the start of my career a quarter-century ago, when tax differences were important. Today, differences in economic conditions are almost exclusively caused by the level of education of residents.

This means that the observed differences in economic conditions across states seems likely to worsen. We are in the first extended period of diverging educational attainment in U.S. history. And there is a very deep political divide around education policy that seems certain to exacerbate the economic and political divide.

The 15 states that have seen the biggest relative drop in educational attainment are all solidly Republican states—and poor. Indiana ranks 10th on this list. The top 15 states are all solidly Democratic—and affluent. This gap will worsen as states with a large share of well-educated adults are attracting more, while states with a shortage are losing them.

The U.S. remains firmly in a long patch of strong economic performance, easily the best in a half-century. But there are growing differences between states and within urban and rural places. These differences are increasingly connected to political affiliation, which naturally fuels different perceptions of the economy. It is not an excuse for getting economic facts wrong.

The political realignment means that we cannot give credit to Democrats for creating wealth, or the GOP for being more popular in poor places. However, if we stumble through another generation of diverging educational attainment, placing blame for diverging economic performance will be easy.

Michael Hicks is the George and Frances Ball Distinguished Professor of Economics and the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at Ball State University.



Michael Hicks

Hoosier Opinions



Supporting sibling's struggles, protecting parents' well-being

Dear Annie: My brother, "David," has been struggling with alcohol for years, and it's starting to take a toll on our family. Recently, he lost his job and moved back in with our parents, who are both retired and not in the best health. They feel obligated to help him, but it's causing a lot of stress and financial strain.

I want to support David, but I also worry about our parents' well-being. Whenever I try to talk to him about getting help or finding a job, he becomes defensive and angry. My parents don't want to push him too hard because they're afraid of making things worse.

How can I encourage David to seek help without causing more conflict? Is there a way to support my parents while also addressing the impact his behavior is having on the family? I'm not sure how to get through to him. — Worried Sister in Seattle

Dear Worried: Start by having a conversation with David; it's important that he knows you love and support him but that you are also worried about him. Suggest professional resources, like counseling or support groups, and offer to help him find these services.

It's also crucial to support your parents. Encourage them to set boundaries to protect their well-being. You might suggest they attend support groups for families dealing with addiction, such as Al-Anon, where they can find guidance and support.

Remember, change takes time, and it's important to take care of yourself, too.

Dear Annie: My sister passed away during the summer of 2023. She didn't have a will. She was married but specifically stated to me and her husband that she wanted some of her material belongings to be given to me. She also said that she wanted her annuity to be given to me, probably about \$300,000. Her husband was aware of her wishes and even repeated her wishes to me.

Just a few weeks after my sister passed, her husband was diagnosed

with cancer. To make a long story short, my husband and I helped my brother-in-law out with pet sitting, cooking, cleaning, visiting him at the hospital, whatever he needed. We knew his family wasn't going to help and he had no one else. This was over the course of eight months. We were able and willing to assist him, even though we both worked and he lived two hours away.

I feel as if he's holding my sister's belongings and money, and has no intention of passing them to us. I miss my sister and would rather be able to grieve "normally," but I have feelings of anger, disappointment and mistrust toward my BIL now. I haven't asked him for anything of my sister's. I'm holding her in my heart and I'm grateful for the years we had together. It's the principle of him not respecting her wishes and doing what she wanted.

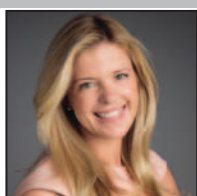
Should I ask him why he's waiting? How should I proceed? — Confused in PA

Dear Confused: I'm so sorry for your loss. You face a very delicate situation with respect to your brother-in-law, but it's still important to address your sister's wishes.

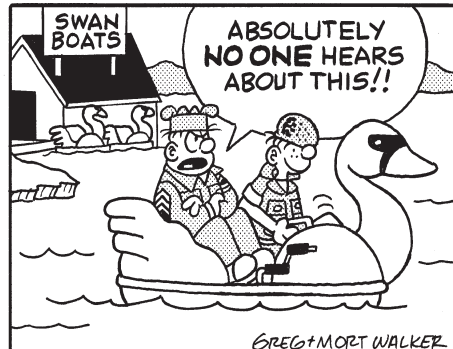
Gently bring up the topic with your BIL, expressing your understanding of his health challenges as well as your need for closure. You might say, "I've been thinking about my sister's wishes regarding her belongings and annuity. Can we discuss how to honor them?" If he's resistant, consider consulting an attorney to understand your legal options. Balancing compassion for his situation with your sister's intentions is key. You deserve to properly grieve and honor your sister's memory.

Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com © 2024 CREATORS.COM

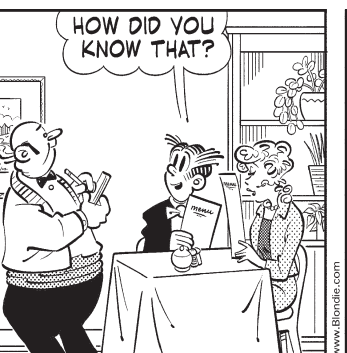
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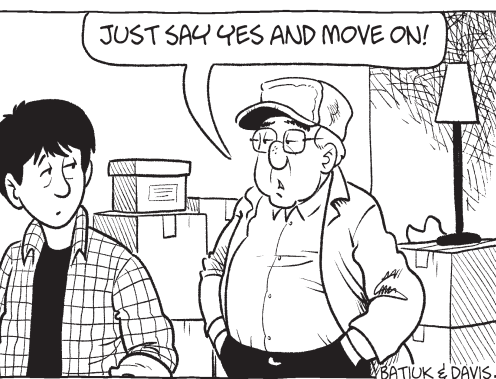
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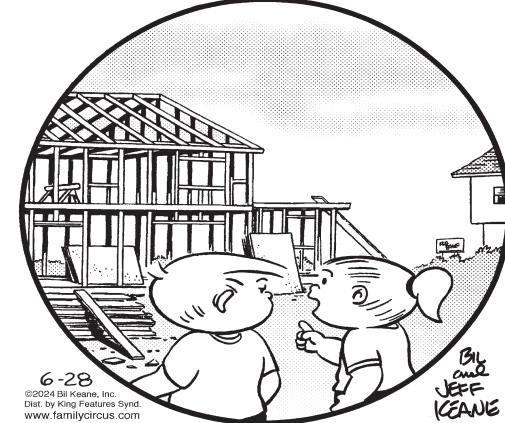
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THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane



The LOCKHORNS



My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



When Jesus died on the cross, every sin you ever committed was placed on Him

something else? — G.P.

Answer: Do you believe that God cannot forgive you for something you've done, even a long time ago? If so, know that those thoughts are actually from your enemy, Satan. He will do almost anything to make us think God hates us and won't forgive us. One of his favorite tricks is to encourage us to keep dredging up the sins of the past, and he uses our memory of them to condemn us and tell us how terrible we are. That is why the Bible calls Satan "the accuser of our brothers" (Revelation 12:10, ESV). But his accusations are false!

Here is the truth: If you have honestly turned to Jesus and asked Him to forgive you and received

His salvation, then you are forgiven — totally and absolutely. When Jesus died on the cross, every sin you ever committed — every one — was placed on Him. He died to pay the penalty for all your sins. So don't believe your emotions and don't let the memories of the past defeat you. The Bible says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7, NKJV). That is God's promise to you — and God cannot lie.

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

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes 'Solution time: 25 mins.' and 'Yesterday's answer 6-28'.

Table with columns for date (06/28) and time slots (M, A, D1, D2, 5 PM, 5:30, 6 PM, 6:30, 7 PM, 7:30, 8 PM, 8:30, 9 PM, 9:30, 10 PM, 10:30, 11 PM, 11:30, 12 AM, 12:30). Lists various TV programs and channels.

Table with columns for date (06/28) and time slots (M, A, D1, D2, 5 PM, 5:30, 6 PM, 6:30, 7 PM, 7:30, 8 PM, 8:30, 9 PM, 9:30, 10 PM, 10:30, 11 PM, 11:30, 12 AM, 12:30). Lists various TV programs and channels.



## Top sports moments in Wells County: Perhaps the biggest sports day in the year

On the eve of my top pick for the 2023-24 top-5 sports moments in Wells County, No. 2 overall will go to Feb. 17, 2024.

Is an entire day considered a moment? Well, this is my list so I'm saying yes due to the significance of it.

On that date, our girls' basketball team won a semi-state and dismantled the No. 1 team to do it. About 50 miles away, another school captured its first swimming sectional in program history and several individuals qualified for states as individuals.

Of course, I'm writing about Norwell's state championship appearance, Bluffton's swim sectional and six individual events heading to state.

This day in particular is where I earned my stripes as a sports editor. I got up early to drive to Huntington North for the morning session of Norwell's semi-state game. Then, I grabbed lunch and made the trip to Jay County to photograph and cover swimming. After that, I made the trail back to Huntington North for the semi-state championship before heading home in the evening.

I will say, the trip was well worth it. Of course, it isn't ideal to have a work day on a weekend go all day, but I think it was a fair trade with a couple of trophies attached to it.

I'll get to the basketball part first. For me, it was this game and the Bluffton football regional against Bishop Luers that were the most highly anticipated games in my two-year career here.

Personally, I made a big deal about the rematch with Hamilton Heights with my stories and previews before the game. I know how much that loss hurt the then junior class the year before, and now they had another crack at them as seniors.

Not only did the Knights knock off the No. 1 team that day, they picked them apart. That group of girls looked more confident than any other game I'd covered, and it lifted them to the semi-state matchup with Bremen, who they destroyed by 44 points.

The semi-state appearance was the first since 1977.

In my short trip to Jay County, I got to

see a first-time sectional champ and some state qualifications.

Unfortunately, heading back to Huntington North for the semi-state final game prevented me from seeing and documenting the Bluffton swim team winning the sectional, but I was fired up when I heard it was official.

The Tigersharks have had a decade of ACAC titles, and that double-digit number this year got their first sectional — and they did it in style.

A victory by over 100 points in the 11-team field was quite impressive. And personally, I'm stoked for the team as I've watched how hard they've worked and their passion.

I was especially excited for head coach Justin Upright, who has been talking with me about this achievement for two years now. He was humble in the moment, but I know well that he was just beaming inside for this, and he deserved it.

The Tigersharks and Norwell Knights' individual swimmers were also successful in the pool that day.

The 200-yard medley team from Bluffton of Noah Brooks, Dalton Rodgers, Elija Robles and Isaac Wheeler and the 400-yard freestyle of Brooks, Griffin Linderwell, Rodgers and Wheeler claimed the top spot in their races and qualified for state. In the individual events, Brooks qualified in the 100-yard backstroke, and Wheeler in the 100-yard butterfly. Robles also advanced on to the regional next week in the diving events.

For Norwell, Rylan Heyerly qualified with a first-place finish in the 100-yard freestyle and the 200-yard freestyle as a freshman! A side note: Heyerly has quite the bright future ahead of him.



Ryan Walker

ryan@news-banner.com



Norwell poses with a championship trophy for the third time in as many weeks during their semi-state run. (News-Banner file photos)



It was a successful sectional final for Bluffton and Norwell at Jay County High School on Saturday. Top, Bluffton's swim team poses with its first-ever sectional championship trophy in program history. The team won with a 425 team score, over 100 points over second-place Delta.

## Bronny James, the son of LeBron James, taken by the Los Angeles Lakers with 55th pick in NBA draft

By TIM REYNOLDS  
AP Basketball Writer

It was the dream that LeBron James first floated a few years ago, the notion of playing in the NBA alongside one of his sons.



Bronny James

And it's a step closer to reality now.

Bronny James — the oldest son of the NBA's all-time scoring leader and four-time champion — was drafted Thursday by the Los Angeles Lakers, the team that his father has played for since 2018. Bronny James was taken with the No. 55 overall pick,

deep in the second round and with only three picks remaining in this year's draft.

"Beyond blessed," Bronny James wrote in an Instagram post.

Adding further intrigue to the move: LeBron James can become a free agent next week, which means he could choose to leave the Lakers and sign elsewhere.

"In the history of the NBA, there's never been a father and a son that have shared an NBA basketball court and that feels like something that could be magical," Lakers general manager Rob Pelinka said. "We

know, and have to respect of course, that LeBron has a decision on his opt-out ... but if it worked out that he was on our team next season, NBA history could be made. And NBA history should be made in a Lakers uniform."

The draft move doesn't guarantee that father and son will actually play in a game together, nor does it even guarantee that Bronny James will be on the Lakers' roster next season. But it certainly raises the possibility that it could happen in what would be an NBA first — a father-son on-court duo in the league simultaneously as players. There have been about 100 instances in NBA history of players joining the league after their fathers played, but those always came at least five years after the father's career ended.

But LeBron James' incredible longevity — he'll match Vince Carter for the longest career as an NBA player ever this coming season, which will be his 22nd in the league — makes the father-son duo possible.

"With the 55th pick in the 2024 NBA draft, the Los Angeles Lakers select Bronny James from the University of Southern California," NBA deputy commissioner Mark Tatum said in announcing the pick, making the moment official for the 19-year-old, who was born just before the start of his father's

(Continued on Page 7)

## Judge and Harper are top the vote-getters, will start in ASG

NEW YORK (AP) — New York Yankees outfielder Aaron Judge and Philadelphia Phillies first baseman Bryce Harper were elected Thursday to start in the July 16 All-Star Game at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas.

Judge led the major leagues with 3,425,309 votes in the first round of fan balloting and was picked for his sixth American League start in seven All-Star Games, though he missed last year because of a sprained right big toe. He also was the leading vote-getter during the first phase in 2022.

He became the 11th player to lead the majors in votes on multiple occasions since fan balloting resumed in 1970, joining Ken Griffey Jr. (five times); Rod Carew (four); Ichiro Suzuki (three); and Hank Aaron, José Bautista, Johnny Bench, Albert Pujols, Cal Ripken Jr., Alex Rodriguez and Ozzie Smith (two each).

Harper topped the NL and was second in the big leagues with 3,277,920 votes. He was chosen for his eighth All-Star Game, seventh as a starter. His previous All-Star appearances came as an outfielder and designated hitter.

The pair were selected under rules that began in 2022 and give starting spots to the top vote-getter in each league in the first phase of online voting, which began June 5 and ended Thursday. Two finalists at every other position advanced to the second phase, which runs from noon EDT on Sunday to noon EDT on June 30. Votes from the first phase do not carry over.

An individual can vote once per 24-hour period.

Remaining starters will be announced on June 30. Pitchers and reserves will be revealed on July 7.

Six players each from the Baltimore Orioles and Philadelphia Phillies advanced to the second phase.

In the final days of the initial voting, Philadelphia's Kyle Schwarber overtook Atlanta's Marcell Ozuna for the second spot among NL designated hitters behind Los Angeles Dodgers star Shohei Ohtani.

Baltimore's Ryan O'Hearn moved ahead of Yankees slugger Giancarlo Stanton for second among designated hitters in the AL behind Houston's Yordan Alvarez. O'Hearn had been fourth, also trailing Cleveland's David Fry.

### AL finalists:

Catcher: Salvador Perez, Adley Rutschman

First Base: Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Ryan Mountcastle

Second Base: Jose Altuve, Marcus Semien

Third Base: José Ramírez, Jordan Westburg

Shortstop: Gunnar Henderson, Bobby Witt Jr.

Outfield: Steven Kwan, Anthony Santander, Juan Soto, Kyle Tucker

Designated Hitter: Yordan Alvarez, Ryan O'Hearn

### NL finalists:

Catcher: William Contreras, J.T. Realmuto

Second Base: Luis Arraez, Ketel Marte

Third Base: Alec Bohm, Manny Machado

Shortstop: Mookie Betts, Trea Turner

Outfield: Nick Castellanos, Teoscar Hernández, Brandon Marsh, Jurickson Proffar, Fernando Tatis Jr., Christian Yelich

Designated Hitter: Shohei Ohtani, Kyle Schwarber

## Happ homers in 10th, Cubs snap 4-game skid with win over Giants

By GIDEON RUBIN  
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Ian Happ homered in the 10th inning, Nico Hoerner had three hits and also went deep, and the Chicago Cubs snapped a four-game skid with a 5-3 win over the San Francisco Giants on Thursday.

Happ homered to center off Luke Jackson (4-2) with automatic runner Cody Bellinger on base.

Héctor Neris (7-2) struck out two in a scoreless ninth inning for the win, and Porter Hodge worked around a first-and-second, no-outs jam in the 10th to complete his first save opportunity.

Happ acknowledged the Cubs struggles in close games this year, noting he hoped the win is something his team can build on.

The Giants trailed 3-0 going into the sixth, when Jorge Soler's two-out ground-rule double highlighted a three-run inning. San Francisco hadn't advanced a runner past second before that.

Hoerner hit a two-run homer to left off Jordan Hicks in the third. The Cubs extended their lead later in the inning on Seiya Suzuki's RBI triple.

Hicks gave up three runs in five innings in which he struck out seven and walked two.

Giants manager Bob Melvin said he summoned Jackson to pitch the 10th in part out of necessity, noting his bullpen has been taxed of late.

The Giants used six pitchers on Thursday and have used at least five in a game 38 times this season.



## Briscoe named to replace outgoing Truex Jr. at Joe Gibbs Racing

HUNTERSVILLE, N.C. (AP) — Chase Briscoe and Joe Gibbs Racing confirmed that the NASCAR driver will replace the retiring Martin Truex Jr. in the No. 19 Toyota for the 2025 Cup Series season, days after driver Christopher Bell accidentally spoiled the surprise at a news conference.

Bell was asked an innocuous question over the weekend at New Hampshire Motor Speedway about a potential leadership shift at JGR in the wake of Truex's retirement.

"Whenever Chase comes into the car ...," he started to say. Bell stopped instantly and smiled, a realization swept over him there was no going back on this blunder. Briscoe would in fact inherit the No. 19 Toyota next season at JGR.

JGR poked fun at the mishap at Tuesday's news conference to introduce Briscoe in North Carolina.

"Since I had the mistake of starting this," Bell said. "I guess I'll get to finish it out today."

With that, Bell introduced Briscoe, set to become the first driver among the four at Stewart-Haas Racing to land a Cup ride for next season. SHR, a two-time NASCAR championship team with 69 Cup Series victories since its 2009 formation, announced last month it would close its organization at the end of this season. SHR this year fields Cup cars for Briscoe, Josh Berry, Noah Gragson and Ryan Preece.

"We have to win," Gibbs said. "We think Chase can win."

Briscoe, who signed a multi-year contract, is 16th in the Cup points standings after a runner-up finish in Sunday's race at New Hampshire. In his Cup Series career, he has one victory, 12 top-five finishes, 27 top-10s and two poles.

"JGR is the place to be if you want to go win races week in and week out and to race for the championship every year," Briscoe said.

Bass Pro will remain as a sponsor, including the 2025 Daytona 500. Truex has won 34 Cup races, 32 since 2015. He had a career-high eight wins in 2017, when he won the series championship. He will remain with JGR as an ambassador.

Briscoe will be paired with crew chief James Small. Small helped lead Truex to eight wins since he became crew chief in 2020.

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News-Banner Scoreboard

BASKETBALL

WNBA

Table with Eastern Conference and Western Conference WNBA game results including teams like New York, Connecticut, Atlanta, Indiana, Chicago, and Washington.

Table with Friday's Games and Saturday's Games WNBA game results including Washington, Texas, Philadelphia, Toronto, Colorado, and White Sox.

BASEBALL

MLB

Table with American League East and Central Divisions MLB game results including Baltimore, New York, Boston, Tampa Bay, and Toronto.

Table with National League East and Central Divisions MLB game results including Philadelphia, Atlanta, New York, Washington, and Miami.

Midwest League

Table with High-A Midwest League game results including Lake County, West Michigan, Dayton, and Peoria.

Table with Friday's Games and Saturday's Games MLB game results including Philadelphia, Toronto, Cleveland, San Diego, Houston, Oakland, and Los Angeles.

Table with Dayton at Fort Wayne, Beloit at Cedar Rapids, and Quad Cities at Peoria game results.

Table with Saturday, June 29 game results including Dayton at Fort Wayne, Great Lakes at Lake County, and West Michigan at Lansing.

Table with Beloit at Cedar Rapids, South Bend at Wisconsin, and Quad Cities at Peoria game results.

Lakers take Bronny James

(Continued from Page 6)

It's possible that Bronny James' debut in a Lakers uniform could be July 12 in Las Vegas, in the franchise's summer league opener against the Houston Rockers.

Bronny James is a guard, one who was listed at 6-foot-4 on Southern California's roster but measured at 6 feet, 1 1/2 inches at the draft combine.

"Bronny is, first and foremost, a person of high character," Pelinka said. "And second, he is a young man that works incredibly hard."

There will be cries of nepotism, cries that the Lakers did this only because of who LeBron James is. But Pelinka insisted that the Lakers will have a plan for Bronny James' development.

Pelinka and the Lakers staff, including newly hired coach J.J. Redick, made the call to Klutch Sports CEO Rich Paul before the pick was made.

coach J.J. Redick, made the call to Klutch Sports CEO Rich Paul before the pick was made and were able to speak with Bronny James moments before the selection was officially official.

"Coach Redick and I were able to welcome him to the Lakers family and let him know that this moment was happening mostly because of the work he's put into the game and because of the character young man that he is," Pelinka said.

Bronny James played one year of college basketball at USC and averaged 4.8 points, 2.8 rebounds and 2.1 assists per game last season.

Panel of doctors cleared Bronny James for NBA play last month. Nike, the shoe giant that LeBron James has had a business relationship with through the entirety of his NBA career, wasted no time in congratulating Bronny James by releasing a new ad.

"The biggest moments in sports happen with the Lakers," Pelinka said. "That's how we're built and we're excited to see this story unfold."

Bronny," the company wrote.

Day 2 of the draft saw 24 other players get taken before Bronny James, though none of them — not even close, really — got the attention that the No. 55 selection received, for obvious reasons.

The 55th pick rarely turns out to be a player who captures a slew of attention. The best 55th pick in NBA history would be current Miami Heat guard Patty Mills, selected in 2009 and someone who has scored 7,893 points in his 15-season career.

Some other notable No. 55 picks include Marc Lavaroni, Mark Blount, Kenny Gattison and E'Twaun Moore. There's never been a No. 55 pick that was an NBA All-Star, an All-NBA player, an All-Rookie team player or an All-Defensive team pick.

Last season's No. 55 pick, Isaiah Wong, scored exactly two points for Indiana as a rookie. Add up every No. 55 pick ever, and their NBA career scoring total is 28,364 points — more than 12,000 points less than LeBron James has scored in his career.

"The biggest moments in sports happen with the Lakers," Pelinka said. "That's how we're built and we're excited to see this story unfold."

The Classifieds

SUDOKU

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

King Classic Sudoku

9x9 Sudoku grid with some numbers filled in.

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Difficulty: ★★★★★

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Lottery Numbers

Thursday's Drawings HOOSIER LOTTERY Cash 5 — 09-26-30-40-44 Cash4Life — 04-15-17-34-35, Cash Ball: 04 Quick Draw MIDDAY — 01-06-07-10-13-15-20-31-34-41-43-51-52-53-57-58-60-64-65-66, BE: 65 Daily Three-MIDDAY — 01-04-07, SB: 06 Daily Three-Evening — 05-07-06, SB: 08 Daily Four-MIDDAY — 09-01-05-03, SB: 06 Daily Four-Evening — 06-06-04-00, SB: 08 Quick Draw Evening — 07-09-12-16-23-24-25-26-35-36-41-42-58-61-62-64-65-69-73-77, BE: 73 Hoosier Lotto — Estimated jackpot (for Saturday): \$15.5 million MEGA MILLIONS Estimated jackpot (for Friday): \$116 million POWERBALL Estimated jackpot (for Saturday): \$113 million

Pets



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SUDOKU ANSWER

9x9 grid containing the solved numbers for the Sudoku puzzle.



# Supreme Court blocks enforcement of EPA's 'good neighbor' pollution rule

By **MATTHEW DALY**  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency will not be able to enforce a key rule limiting air pollution in nearly a dozen states while separate legal challenges proceed around the country, under a Supreme Court decision Thursday.

The EPA's "good neighbor" rule is intended to restrict smokestack emissions from power plants and other industrial sources that burden downwind areas with smog-causing pollution.

Three energy-producing states — Ohio, Indiana and West Virginia — challenged the rule, along with the steel industry and other groups, calling it costly and ineffective.

The Supreme Court put the rule on hold while legal challenges continue, the conservative-led court's latest blow to federal regulations.

The high court, with a 6-3 conservative majority, has increasingly reined in the powers of federal agencies, including the EPA, in recent years. The justices have restricted EPA's authority to fight air and water pollution, including a landmark 2022 ruling that limited EPA's authority to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from power plants that contribute to global warming.

The court is also weighing whether to overturn its 40-year-old Chevron decision, which has been the basis for upholding a wide range of regulations on public health, workplace safety and consumer protections.

A look at the good neighbor rule and the implications of the court decision.

## What is the 'good neighbor' rule?

The EPA adopted the rule as a way to protect downwind states that receive unwanted air pollution from other states. Besides the potential health impacts from out-of-state pollution, many states face their own federal deadlines to ensure clean air.

States such as Wisconsin, New York and Connecticut said they struggle to meet federal standards and reduce harmful levels of ozone because of pollution from out-of-state power plants, cement kilns and natural gas pipelines that drift across their borders.

Ground-level ozone, commonly known as smog, forms when industrial pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, refineries and other sources chemically react in the presence of sunlight. High ozone levels can cause respiratory problems, including asthma and chronic bronchitis. People with compromised immune systems, the elderly and children playing outdoors are particularly vulnerable.

Judith Vale, New York's deputy solicitor general, told the court that for some states, as much as 65% of

smog pollution comes from outside its borders.

States that contribute to ground-level ozone must submit plans ensuring that coal-fired power plants and other industrial sites do not add significantly to air pollution in other states. In cases where a state has not submitted a "good neighbor" plan — or where EPA disapproves a state plan — a federal plan is supposed to ensure downwind states are protected.

## What's next for the rule?

The Supreme Court decision blocks EPA enforcement of the rule and sends the case back to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, which is considering a lawsuit challenging the regulation that was brought by 11 mostly Republican-leaning states.

An EPA spokesman said the agency believes the plan is firmly rooted in its authority under the Clean Air Act and "looks forward to defending the merits of this vital public health protection" before that appeals court.

The spokesman, Timothy Carroll, said the Supreme Court's ruling will "postpone the benefits that the Good Neighbor Plan is already achieving in many states and communities."

While the plan is on pause, "Americans will continue to be exposed to higher levels of ground-level ozone, resulting in costly public health impacts that can be especially harmful to children and older adults," Carroll said. Ozone disproportionately affects people of color, families with low incomes, and other vulnerable populations, he said.

Rich Nolan, president and CEO of the National Mining Association, said he was pleased that the Supreme Court "recognized the immediate harm to industry and consumers posed by this reckless rule. No agency is permitted to operate outside of the clear bounds of the law and today, once again, the Supreme Court reminded the EPA of that fact."

With a stay in place, Nolan said the mining industry looks forward to making its case in court that the EPA rule "is unlawful in its excessive overreach and must be struck down to protect American workers, energy independence, the electric grid and the consumers it serves."

## Few states participate

The EPA rule was intended to provide a national solution to the problem of ozone pollution, but challengers said it relied on the assumption that all 23 states targeted by the rule would participate. In fact, only about half that number of states were participating as of early this year.

A lawyer for industry groups that are challenging the rule said it imposes significant and immediate costs that could affect the reliability of the electric grid. With

fewer states participating, the rule may result in only a small reduction in air pollution, with no guarantee the final rule will be upheld, industry lawyer Catherine Stetson told the Supreme Court in oral arguments earlier this year.

The EPA has said power-plant emissions dropped by 18% in 2023 in the 10 states where it has been allowed to enforce its rule, which was finalized last year. Those states are Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin. In California, limits on emissions from industrial sources other than power plants are supposed to take effect in 2026.

The rule is on hold in another dozen states because of separate legal challenges. The states are Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah and West Virginia.

## Administrative overstep or life-saving protection?

Critics, including Republicans and business groups, call the good neighbor rule an example of government overreach.

The EPA rule and other Biden administration regulations "are designed to hurriedly rid the U.S. power sector of fossil fuels by sharply increasing the operating costs, ... forcing the plants' premature retirement," Republican lawmakers said in a brief filed with the high court.

Supporters disputed that and called the "good neighbor" rule critical to address interstate air pollution and ensure that all Americans have access to clean air.

"Today's move by far-right Supreme Court justices to stay commonsense clean air rules shows just how radical this court has become," said Charles Harper of environmental group Evergreen Action.

"The court is meddling with a rule that would prevent 1,300 Americans from dying prematurely every year from pollution that crosses state borders. We know that low-income and disadvantaged communities with poor air quality will bear the brunt of this delay," Harper said.

Roger Reynolds, senior legal director of the environmental group Save the Sound, said the decision hinders the EPA from protecting states such as Connecticut and New York that suffer from ozone pollution generated in the Midwest.

"We cannot reach healthy air quality for our residents without addressing upwind pollution, in addition to local sources," Reynolds said.

The rule applies mostly to states in the South and Midwest that contribute to air pollution along the East Coast. Some states, such as Texas, California, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Wisconsin, both contribute to downwind pollution and receive it from other states.

## The Supreme Court allows emergency

## abortions in Idaho for now in limited ruling

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court cleared the way Thursday for Idaho hospitals to provide emergency abortions, for now, in a procedural order that left key questions unanswered and could mean the issue ends up before the conservative-majority court again soon.

The order was briefly posted on the court's website accidentally on Wednesday and abruptly removed. By a 6-3 vote, it reverses the court's earlier order that had allowed an Idaho abortion ban to go into effect, even in medical emergencies.

Abortion is an animating issue in the 2024 election campaign, a direct result of the court's seismic ruling two years ago that overturned the nationwide right to abortion. But in this decision and another that preserved access to abortion medication, the court stopped short of issuing broader rulings.

The Idaho order doesn't answer key questions about whether doctors can provide emergency abortions elsewhere, a significant issue as most Republican-controlled states have moved to restrict the procedure.

In Texas, for example, an appeals court has sided with the state, finding federal health care law does not trump a state ban on abortion. Complaints of pregnant patients being turned away from emergency rooms in Texas immediately spiked following the Supreme Court's 2022 decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, according to federal documents obtained by The Associated Press.

The Supreme Court took up the Idaho case after the Biden administration sued to allow abortions in emergency cases where a woman's health was at serious risk. Idaho had argued that its law does allow life-saving abortions and the federal government was wrongly pushing for wider exceptions.

But the contours of the issue have changed in the months since the court agreed to hear it, Justice Amy Coney Barrett wrote in a concurrence joined by Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

"I am now convinced that these cases are no longer appropriate for early resolution," Barrett wrote, pointing to revisions Idaho made to its abortion ban and the Biden administration making clear it was only seeking to allow emergency abortions in rare cases. Kavanaugh and Barrett were both part of the majority who voted to overturn Roe v. Wade.

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said the court should have decided now, arguing its earlier order meant Idaho doctors were forced to watch as patients suffered or were airlifted out of state for care.

"While this court dawdles and the country waits, pregnant people experiencing emergency medical conditions remain in a precarious position," she said, underscoring her views by reading a summary of her opinion aloud in the courtroom. "This court had a chance to bring clarity and certainty to this tragic situation, and we have squandered it."

# June

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# Former Uvalde police chief indicted over response to Robb Elementary shooting

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The former Uvalde schools police chief was indicted over his role in the slow police response to the 2022 massacre at a Texas elementary school that left 19 children and two teachers dead, the local sheriff said Thursday.

Pete Arredondo was indicted by a grand jury on 10 counts of felony child endangerment/abandonment and briefly booked into the county jail before he was released on bond, Uvalde Sheriff Ruben Nolasco told The Associated Press in a text message Thursday night.

The Uvalde Leader-News and the San Antonio Express-News reported that former school officer Adrian Gonzales also was indicted on multiple similar charges. The Uvalde Leader-News reported that District Attorney Christina Mitchell confirmed the indictment.

Mitchell did not return phone and email messages from The Associated Press seeking comment. Several family members of victims of the shooting did not respond to phone messages seeking comment.

The indictments make Arredondo, who was the on-site commander during the attack, and Gonzales the first officers to face criminal charges in one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history. A scathing report by Texas lawmakers that examined the police response described Gonzales as one of the first officers to enter the building

after the shooting began.

The indictments were kept under seal until the men were in custody. It was unclear when Arredondo's indictment would be publicly released.

Over two years ago, an 18-year-old gunman opened fire in a fourth grade classroom, where he remained for more than 70 minutes before officers confronted and killed him. In total, 376 law enforcement officers massed at Robb Elementary School on May 24, 2022, some waiting in the hallway outside the classroom, even as the gunman could be heard firing an AR-15-style rifle inside.

"Today is another day in an impossibly painful journey," state Rep. Joe Moody, who helped the state lawmakers investigation, posted on the social platform X. "The hurt for them will never subside. Today, I pray that there is justice and some sense of closure for them in this process rather than prolonged suffering."

The office of a former attorney for Arredondo said they did not know whether the former chief has new representation. The AP could not immediately find a phone number to reach Gonzales.

Arredondo lost his job three months after the shooting. Several officers involved were eventually fired, and separate investigations by the Department of Justice and state lawmakers faulted law enforcement with botching their response to the massacre.

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