

The News - Banner

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2024 BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection \$1.00

Township board, trustee at odds over 2025 budget

By HOLLY GASKILL
 Jefferson Township board members have alleged misconduct of the trustee regarding the 2025 budget.

In a meeting Wednesday night, board member Tim Baker reported that the final approved version of the township's budget had not been submitted to the Department of Local Government Finance. Rather, trustee Larry Heckber had submitted an earlier version of the budget.

The version on the DLGF's website includes a fire department budget approved on Oct. 22 with the 2025 fire protection agreement with the town of Ossian. The board then passed a modified budget on Oct. 28.

This modified budget included significant changes to the categorization of line items and the amount budgeted for nearly every line item, which Baker had handwritten in pen over the prior budget. For example, salaries

and wages budgeted at \$40,574 were changed to \$5,000. The total amount budgeted for the fire department remained consistent.

"We're still going to spend \$122,000 one way or another," Heckber argued Wednesday.

"Then why'd you change it?" Baker responded, referring to the version to the DLGF.

Baker explained that he had revised the budget because the fire protection agreement had not yet been signed by the town of

Ossian, and he wanted to ensure the budget was set up if Jefferson Township had to begin its own fire department. He believed the township could transfer funds as needed once the agreement was approved.

The amended budget had been passed 2-1 by the board with Baker and David Haiflich in favor and AJ Springer against. After this decision, Heckber distributed a letter to residents saying that Baker "did not have the best interest of Jefferson Township in mind."

As he discussed Wednesday, Baker provided paper copies of two emails to The News-Banner. The first was an Oct. 29 email from Baker to DLGF Budget Field Representative George Helton in which Baker took issue with the details of Heckber's letter. Baker claimed these were inaccurate to what the township was trying to do. He also rebutted that "DLGF says to do things a certain way. These are board decisions I feel."

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Rocking Around the Christmas Tree
 Bluffton-Harrison preschoolers hosted their families for a special Christmas program Thursday. At top, the students take a rock and roll spin on classic carols. Above left is Nehemiah Heckman waving to his sister before the performance. Above right, Laxus Musgrove and Kater Evilsizor beam at the applause. (Photos by Holly Gaskill)

Bluffton Parks Department receives \$100K grant for community pool project

By HOLLY GASKILL
 The Bluffton Parks Department has received a \$100,000 grant for building a new Wells Community Pool.

Parks Superintendent Brandy Fiechter reported the award from the Wells County Foundation to the park board Thursday evening. Fiechter said she's also answered some follow-up questions to the department's READI 2.0 grant application, which will be a major push toward the project.

She also presented a Design Collaborative conceptual plan to the board members, though the design is highly subject to change.

The plan incorporates several popular items from a recent community survey, including zero-depth entry and stair entry for accessibility, an eight-lane 25-meter pool, diving platforms, a small lazy river, slides, and a toddler play area. Fiechter hopes to have several recreational elements for teens and older children, like a climbing wall or "aqua-zip." "I think it's got something for everybody," she said.

The plan also includes a pool house area with a party space for daytime rentals and a pump house for easier chemical management. The existing pavilion and playground

(Continued on Page 2)

Braun chooses Gloria Sachdev as health secretary, Anthony Scott as ISP Superintendent

By WHITNEY DOWNARD
Indiana Capital Chronicle
 The president and CEO of a health care organization — and registered lobbyist — has been chosen by the incoming Braun administration as the secretary of health and family services while a captain with three decades of experience

will lead the Indiana State Police.

Gloria Sachdev, who leads the Employer's Forum of Indiana, is a familiar face around the Statehouse after years of advocating for health care reform, including bills to increase transparency and lower health care costs. Anthony Scott, a captain and area com-

mander, will succeed Superintendent Doug Carter as the leader of the Indiana State Police.

Sachdev spearheaded cost transparency studies that ranked Indiana's hospital prices among the most expensive in the nation — though the state's hospital lobbying organization ques-

(Continued on Page 2)

Hoosier voter turnout down, but better than before

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ
Indiana Capital Chronicle
 Fewer Hoosiers turned out to vote in November than they did during the pandemic-era 2020 presidential election, according to Indiana's final numbers — but they bested ballot counts and turnout recorded in the two previous presidential elections.

Almost 3 million Indiana residents voted, or about 61% of those registered with the state.

That's nearly 100,000 fewer Hoosier voices than in 2020, when turnout hit a high of 65% — but better than the 2016 and 2012 elections.

Laura Merrifield Wilson, a political science professor at the University of Indianapolis, called 2020 "an anomaly in many ways" but said it's too soon to know the pandemic's electoral impacts.

"We'll have to have successive presidential elections to be able to confirm whether or not that was a blip in the radar because of genuinely unusual, once-in-a-century experiences," she said.

But, she observed, Indiana — like other states — expanded voter access during the pandemic.

(Continued on Page 8)



Bobcat Carols
 On Thursday, Lancaster Elementary School hosted its annual Christmas music program, this year themed around "Christmas At the Movies." (Photo by Jonathan Snyder)

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Outside

Good weather for Frosty the Snowman continues

Today	Saturday	Sunday
High 28	High 44	High 50
Low 22	Low 37	Low 38

More Weather on Page 2

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Vol. 96 No. 35
FRIDAY
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Jerry Flack & Associates

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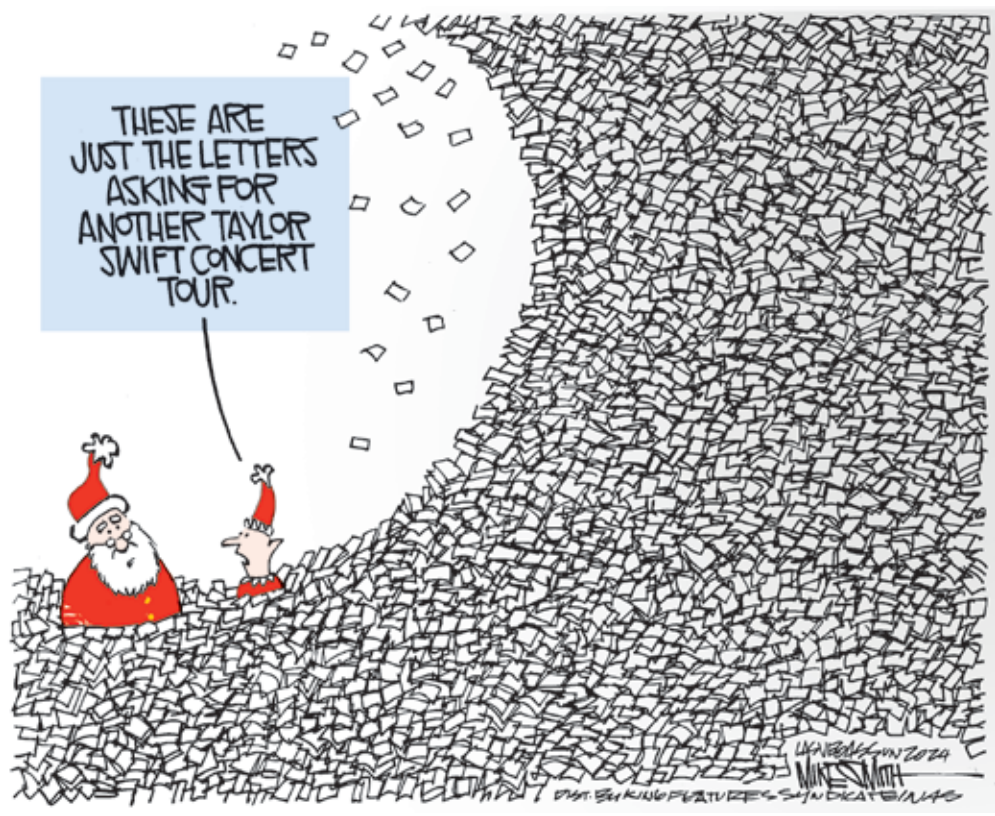
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Christmas 2024 Cometh - a look through cartoonists' eyes...



Other Opinions

Food insecurity too prevalent in America

It is an astonishingly large number: 5.3 billion. That's how many meals were distributed by the nation's largest domestic hunger relief organization, Feeding America, in 2023 alone. In a country of more than 330 million people, it is evidence of how widespread and persistent food insecurity remains in the United States.

Food insecurity is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as the lack of access to enough food for an active and healthy life. More than 13 percent of Americans — 47 million people — experienced food insecurity in 2023; the rates are even higher in Black and Latino communities. In some of the poorest regions of America, mostly rural areas in the South, food insecurity among children is as high as 48 percent. But it is present in every county in the country.

While lawmakers in local, state and federal government struggle to find long-term solutions, Feeding America, a network of roughly 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries and meal programs, is filling the void every day for tens of millions of Americans. It is one of the organizations supported by The New York Times Communities Fund.

Feeding America needs help to continue this essential frontline work. The average cost of a single meal may be only \$3.99, but when that is multiplied by the millions of meals required, it adds up to \$33 billion that families need and don't have for groceries. After a temporary boost during the Covid pandemic, food donations and government funding have fallen off sharply, even as the demand remains steady.

Some of that demand is a lingering effect of the inflation that peaked in 2022, but some food costs are still stubbornly high.

Another problem is that nearly half of Americans who are food insecure are unlikely to qualify for federal programs like SNAP because many have incomes that are too high to be eligible. Most families of four that receive SNAP benefits have incomes below \$40,560. Feeding America estimates that that leaves around 20 million people in a no man's land, where they can neither afford sufficient food nor qualify for help to pay for it.

Racial disparities are also striking. Nationwide, roughly one-quarter of Black Americans experience food insecurity, as compared with 10 percent of white non-Hispanic Americans, according to a report by Feeding America. In some parts of the rural American South, roughly two-thirds of Black people are experiencing food insecurity.

Solving this crisis will require a host of policy responses, including expanding SNAP eligibility and the child and earned-income tax credits, improving access to school lunch programs and building more affordable housing, which would ease some of the pressure on family budgets. In the meantime, you can help by donating to Feeding America and similar organizations. No one should go hungry in the richest nation on Earth.

THE NEW YORK POST
Distributed by The Associated Press

Can the nation wait until Jan. 20?

Joe Biden has 42 more days to serve as president of the United States. But anyone watching events in Paris over the weekend would think President-elect Donald Trump has already taken office. The president-elect traveled to France ostensibly to celebrate the reopening of Notre Dame cathedral, but the visit turned into high-level diplomacy between European leaders — French President Emmanuel Macron and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, among others — and the next U.S. president. With the war in Ukraine at a critical stage, not to mention the Middle East continuing its meltdown, the event took on enormous significance, with Trump acting as de facto leader of the free world. The real president for the next six weeks, Biden, was back home, resting up.

Trump is quickly assembling an administration. After several weeks of mostly quiet working, he has been speaking more publicly in recent days about what he will do when he assumes the presidency on Jan. 20. Leaders in Washington and in the world are planning and preparing for that time. Biden seems less and less relevant to the conversation. "Biden has effectively disappeared from the radar," reports Politico. "Within the Democratic Party, on Capitol Hill — and even within his own administration — it feels like he left the Oval Office weeks ago."

But Biden is still president of the United States, and Trump is not. If an emergency, a crisis, arises, Biden, even in his weakened condition, will



Byron York

have to deal with it. Right now, it appears that much of the Biden administration is spending a significant amount of its time trying to "Trump-proof" Biden's policies — that is, to tie the incoming president's hands by making it difficult for him to change things. That's not particularly productive work.

Certainly, most Republicans, and lots of independents, and even some Democrats, would prefer if the inauguration came before Jan. 20. But the inauguration date is in the

and it can't be changed without amending the Constitution. The arrangement has worked relatively well for 90 years, even though it doesn't seem so great at this particular moment. Should Congress undertake the work of changing inauguration day?

This issue has come up a number of times in recent presidencies. In the 2008 election, the economy was in grave difficulty, and an exhausted President George W. Bush was limping to the end of his second term. There were Democrats who were frustrated by the time it took before the newly elected President Barack Obama could take office. After the

2020 election, there were some who wanted Trump out of the White House as quickly as possible. On the other hand, presidents have taken office who clearly could have used more time to get ready, such as after the time-consuming Florida recount in the 2000 presidential election.

Now, we're in an obviously unusual situation that, with any luck, is unlikely to be replicated soon. For one thing, President Biden, at 82 years old, is no longer mentally and physically up to the job of being a full-time president. For another, Trump has been president before and is running a far smoother transition than he did the first time around, in 2016-2017. In other words, Biden is ready to go, and Trump is ready to replace him. The circumstances are right for a shorter transition. But that will not always be the case. Without an overwhelming crisis, like the situation in 1932-1933, it seems unlikely there will be enough political will to make a change, so Jan. 20 it is.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner. byork@washingtonexaminer.com



Constitution, in the 20th Amendment. The amendment was ratified in 1933 to replace the previous inauguration date of March 4, which had been the date since nearly the beginning of the nation but left a long transition period between a presidential election in the first week of November and the inauguration in the first week of March. In 1932, in the crisis of the Great Depression, Congress proposed the date-change amendment. By early 1933, it had been ratified by enough states to become part of the Constitution and take effect after the presidential election of 1936.

So, inauguration day is Jan. 20,

Today in History

By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Dec. 13, the 348th day of 2024. There are 18 days left in the year.

Today in history: On Dec. 13, 2003, Saddam Hussein was captured by U.S. forces while hiding in a hole under a farmhouse in Adwar, Iraq, near his hometown of Tikrit. Also on this date:

In 1862, Union forces led by Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside launched futile attacks against entrenched Confederate soldiers during the Civil War Battle of Fredericksburg; the soundly defeated Northern troops withdrew two days later.

In 1996, the U.N. Security Council chose Kofi Annan of Ghana to become the world body's seventh secretary-general.

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Should I tell my best friend her family's lifelong secret?

Dear Annie: I've been best friends for over 50 years now with a girl I was neighbors with growing up. When I was about 12, I remember coming home from her house upset over the way her dad had treated her. He was always very cold and abrupt, and he treated her as less than he did her older sister.

I confided in my parents about this, and they sort of brushed it off. My parents, thinking I had left the room and was out of earshot, started discussing this and I overheard my dad say that it was probably because this man wasn't my friend's real dad. To their shock, I immediately came back into the room and asked what that meant. They tried to backpedal, but I knew what I heard and wanted an explanation. They sat me down and told me that he was not her biological father. They did not give me details as I was only 12, but they did make me promise to never say a word. I have kept that promise for 40 years, even after both her parents passed away.

Now recently, she has informed me of her interest in her family tree and about wanting to have her ancestry done through one of those DNA places. I am now beside myself with guilt! I'm so afraid she's going to discover the truth. On one hand, maybe it would explain her dad's behavior toward her, but on the other hand, how would I react to her telling me if she finds out? Would I admit that I have always known or just act like it's news to me as well? Should I just go ahead and tell her what I know? I certainly don't want to lie to such an important person in my life, but I'm at a loss as to what the right thing to do is. Since becoming an adult, I've spoken to my parents about it, who have explained how this all happened 54 years ago. I have all the information now, but what do I do with it? — Struggling

Dear Struggling: As a child, you were tasked with an impossible choice: Either betray your parents' trust or your best friend's. Over 50 years later, you're in the same lose-lose situation.

Honesty is usually the best policy — but in this case, it will only hurt her more and potentially demolish your

friendship forever. Ultimately, the truth about your friend's father was not yours to share with her. For whatever reason, she is now curious about her family's roots and sounds like she's ready to accept whatever information lies in store. As difficult as it is to continue this charade, your friend will be even more heartbroken if she finds out both her family and her best friend have been lying to her all these years. Be prepared to support her through learning the truth. She's going to need it.

Dear Annie: The stressed senior who didn't know what to major in should consider going to a local junior college for two years. One of my daughters didn't know what she wanted to do and it was a good choice for her. She did not have to declare a major and just started taking gen ed classes. Because of the low price, she could try out extra things.

She also lived at home and found a good job so was able to save up money. One of the reasons for huge student debt is that people change their major a lot. If they get an associate degree and transfer it to a university, it counts as your first two years.

I have also heard of kids who go to vocational school to learn a skill like welding. They find jobs immediately — and some do sophisticated sculpture in their spare time! Do not discount community colleges! The skills they teach are trending strongly, and cost far less than college. — Other Options

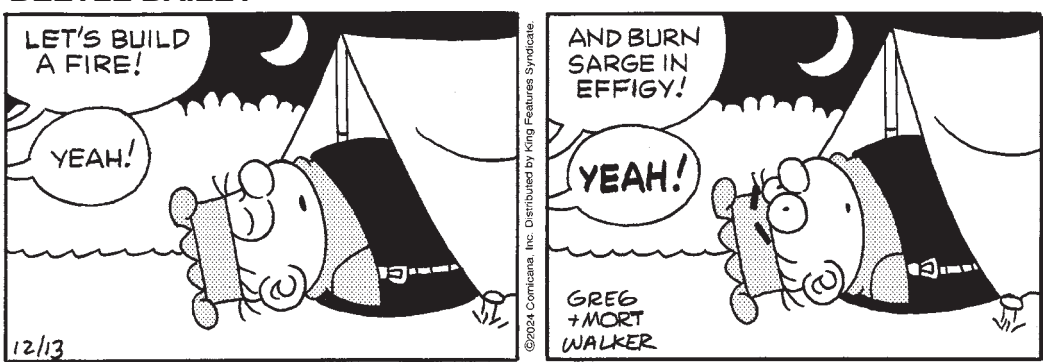
Dear Other Options: A number of you wrote in with advice for "Stressed" with practical alternatives to a traditional four-year college. Things like vocational school or junior college are fantastic options for those who want to learn a trade, save money or simply take a little extra time to figure out their path forward.

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

Dear Annie by Annie Lane



BEETLE BAILEY



BLONDIE



ZITS



CRANKSHAFT



THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane

The LOCKHORNS



My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



People do wrong when they should do right

Question: I am part of a televised Bible study and there are many things I question. Since I'm not a Bible scholar, I often defer to the one "teaching" the Bible. But often the instructors don't back up their claims with Scripture. Isn't that the purpose of a Bible study? Specifically here at Christmastime, there is a discussion on how one sibling can be so giving and the other self-absorbed, blaming others for their selfishness; yet both grew up with the same parents and training. How can this be? — G.S.

developed a victim mentality that allows people to fall prey to casting blame on someone else or something else. We must get this fact firmly fixed in our minds. People do wrong when they should do right. Why? Because of sin.

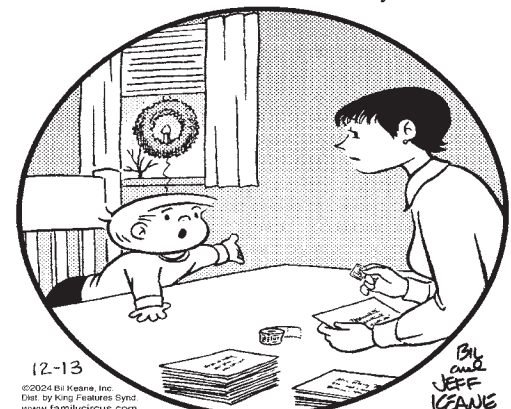
God has given us the power of choice — to reject His salvation or to receive His salvation and become a new person in Christ. Some people do not wish to accept the responsibility for their actions. They blame society or circumstances. But Adam sinned in a perfect environment under perfect circumstances. We must accept the blame ourselves for our sin. While a good environment

can be a positive influence, each person is responsible for what they ultimately believe about God, sin, and salvation. Each person has the freedom to look into God's Word and read it, hear it, receive it, and live by faith in Him.

If we want our faith to grow, we must let the Bible begin to saturate our minds and souls, and the Holy Spirit will enlighten [and teach us] the truth of His Word.

(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.

Yesterday's answer 12-13 crossword puzzle grid.

TV schedule table with columns for time slots (12:13, 1, 2, 5 PM, etc.) and program titles.

News-Banner Scoreboard

Sports Roundup

FOOTBALL

NFL AMERICAN CONFERENCE East South West National Conference East South West

Open: Baltimore, Denver, Houston, Indianapolis, New England, Washington Monday's Games Thursday, Dec. 12 Sunday, Dec. 15

College

College Football Playoff First Round No. 10 Indiana vs. No. 7 Notre Dame, 8 p.m., (ABC/ESPN) Dec. 21

BASKETBALL

High School Thursday Boys' Scores Covenant Christian High School 62, Beech Grove 61

Columbus North 56, E. Central 41 Connerville 46, Batesville 38 Crawford Co. 58, Mitchell 13 Dubois 53, Tell City 51, OT Eastern (Greene) 44, Bloomfield 37

(Continued from Page 6) Chase Kistler led the way with 19 points, followed by Maddox White (12), Wyatt Holmes (10), Parker Christal (2) and Vince Lambert (1).

Bluffton City Gym Men's Basketball League results

Bluffton Men's Basketball League results from Dec. 2 and Dec. 7. Dec. 2 games: Helena Agri Enterprises 64, Craigville Appliance 55.

Tar Heels hire Bill Belichick as HC

By ROB MAADDI and AARON BEARD AP Sports Writers Bill Belichick had seemingly been waiting for the right opportunity to return to an NFL sideline.

points, Marbel Diaz 15. Hayden Nern led Craigville with 20 point, Lucas Hunt with 17. Inteva Doors 72, Peyton's Northern 65. Aaron McFarland led Inteva with 24 points.

The Classifieds

VEHICLES Campers/RV's 2018 THOR HURRICANE, Model 31Z, Class A RV, \$79,000, 260-307-3225.

SERVICES Services HANDYMAN SERVICES, NO job too big or too small, 260-353-9339.

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

EMPLOYMENT Help Wanted WELLS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE is currently seeking applicants for the position of Full Time Deputy Sheriff.

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