

Local

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has granted the Cortland County Industrial Development Agency \$500,000 to use in the City of Cortland and Village of Homer.

Sports

Both the McGraw baseball and softball teams are sitting near the top of Section III Class D, with big wins league titles in sight for both.

Community

The Homer Regional Farmers Market kicks off on Saturday, running from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

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Cortland school district proposes bigger budget

Potential for tax levy hike

By Paul Cifonelli
Managing Editor

Cortland Enlarged City School District is proposing a budget worth just over \$61.6 million for the 2025-26 school year, which includes a 4.99% tax levy increase. The overall budget is a 9.77% increase.

The budget will be Proposition 1 on ballots in the City of Cortland today and will require 60% of votes in favor to pass.

Voting runs from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Kaufman Center — 1 Valley View Dr., Cortland — Virgil Town Hall — 1176 Church St., Virgil — and Cortlandville Municipal Garage — 3587 Terrace Rd., Cortlandville.

Cortland is planning to spend an extra \$3.2 million on student programming next year. The district is hoping to make up some of that gap by pulling \$2 million from its reserves and \$2.3 million from its fund balance. There is also expected to be a \$315,000 raise in administrative costs and \$2 million leap in capital costs.

Should the budget proposal fail to reach 60% of votes, a contingency budget will be enacted. That would keep the tax levy at the same level as the 2024-25 school year, reducing spending and forcing the district to dip even further into its reserves and fund balance. It would also be forced to reduce staffing and programming opportunities and add rental fees for community use of district facilities, per Section 2,023 of the New York State Education Law.

Proposition 2 is for the purchase of one electric bus and three diesel buses, with the cost not exceeding \$1.6 million. The purchase will be bonded over five or eight years, which should keep the debt service schedule steady.

School districts across New York state are expected to transition to electric buses to meet the NYS Zero-Emission Ve-

hicle Mandate. Electric buses can cost between \$400,000 to \$500,000, with diesel buses costing around \$200,000.

Proposition 2 will have no impact on Cortland taxpayers.

Proposition 3 involved purchasing four diesel buses, but will only be considered if Proposition 2 is voted down. Should Proposition 3 come into play, it too will not impact taxpayers.

The Cortland Enlarged City School District, in a newsletter sent to city residents, stated its case for purchasing an electric bus now. The district stated the City of Cortland will be donating a free electric bus charger to the district after a solar field near the district office is completed. School districts are also expected to be fully transitioned to zero-emission vehicles by 2035.

Proposition 4 is for a \$7.7 million capital project "aimed at improving safety, accessibility and facilities across the district." That includes a district-wide security camera replacement, upgrades to the public address systems in each building, an elevator installation at Randall Middle School and an upper gymnasium renovation at Cortland Jr./Sr. High School. The district expects \$7 million of the funding will come through bonding, while an additional \$700,000 will come through the capital reserve fund.

Proposition 5 is proposing a 2.75% tax levy increase, \$473,724, to increase the Cortland Free Library's budget.

There are also four candidates running for three seats on the Cortland Board of Education. Joseph McMahon, Gavin Teeter, Brenda McGovern and Donald Chu are all vying for seats. The ballots will have the four candidates and three write-in spots on them, with a maximum of three candidates to be voted for on each ballot.

Historical Society celebrates 100 years



PAUL CIFONELLI/Managing editor
The Cortland County Historical Society has a new exhibit showing relics related to Alton B. Parker at the Suggett House at 25 Homer Ave., Cortland. The historical society was giving tours and explaining its relics to the public Saturday as it celebrated its 100th year collecting data about and storing things from Cortland's past.

Dryden to hold 1st LPC meeting for NY Forward

By LAUREN ROYCE
For the Cortland Standard

DRYDEN — The Village of Dryden was selected by the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) to receive a \$4.5 million award through the NY Forward (NYF) program. Investment from this program will allow Dryden to develop a Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) and implement transformative projects in Dryden's downtown, according to a press release by the village.

"It's a great way to revitalize, our main street on West Main Street is one of the main focuses," Dryden Mayor Mike Murphy said. "Our focus is on other places too, but that's the main focus because that's the old-



PAUL CIFONELLI/Managing editor
The Village of Dryden's Main St., pictured, is expected to get a facelift after the village was awarded \$4.5 million through the NY Forward program.

est. Most of it was built in the 1800s. There could use some real change."

The first Local Plan-

ning Committee (LPC) meeting is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Dryden Village Hall

upstairs, located at 16 South St., Dryden. Use the George St. entrance. The meeting is open to the public and will include an opportunity for public comment at the conclusion of the meeting.

The meeting will provide an overview of the NY Forward program and planning process, define the LPC's role and responsibilities, review Dryden's NY Forward application and facilitate a discussion related to the vision and goals for Dryden's NY Forward program. The LPC will oversee the planning process and development of the SIP.

"The state since 2016 gave DRI (Downtown Revitalization

See DRYDEN A8



PAUL CIFONELLI/Managing editor

The Cortland Enlarged City School district is proposing a budget for more than \$60 million for the 2025-26 school year, which will require a higher tax levy.

TC3 offering free degrees in high-demand fields

By PETER VOORHEES
Contributing Writer

DRYDEN — Adults can now earn a college degree in high-demand fields for free at Tompkins Cortland Community College thanks to the new SUNY Reconnect program that was created as part of the just-ap-

proved New York State budget.

The program provides for free associate degrees in high-demand fields for New Yorkers 25 to 55 years old, including tuition, fees, books and supplies. An information session for anyone interested in the pro-

gram is planned for June 3 at TC3. Registration is available online at TC3.edu/FreeCC.

"The approval of the New York State budget that includes Governor Kathy Hochul's proposal for free community college marks a significant milestone

in our state's commitment to education," TC3 President Amy Kremenek said. "It is well documented that earning an associate degree in these high-demand fields will greatly enhance career opportunities

See TC3 A8

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WEATHER



Tomorrow's Weather:
High of 58, low of 42,
mostly sunny.

ONLINE



www.cortlandstandard.com



EPA announces \$12M in grants for NY communities

NEW YORK — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Friday that 10 recipients across New York State have been selected to receive more than \$8 million in Brownfields Grants to assess, clean up and revitalize local lands. These investments support locally driven redevelopment, unlocking economic opportunity, creating jobs and improving public health outcomes in communities in New York. In addition, the EPA will provide \$3.75 Million in new and supplemental funding to three successful Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) programs that support Brownfields work on an ongoing basis in New York. These grants put the agency's commitment to protect human health and the environment into action while remaining good stewards of tax dollars and advancing policies to energize the economy.

"The Brownfield grants are essential for New York, allowing us to transform neglected sites into thriving community assets that instill pride and drive economic growth," EPA Regional Administrator Michael Martucci said. "By investing in these revitalization efforts, we not only protect our environment but also create job opportunities."

"Over \$5M in Brownfield grants across NY-22 will help revitalize and improve public health in key areas in Cortland County, Syracuse and the Mohawk Valley," U.S. Representative John W. Mannion (NY-22) said. "I'll continue to work with the

EPA to deliver targeted investments in our communities, and I look forward to seeing these projects drive meaningful and lasting change."

The EPA has made these selections based on a competitive process. The local selectees in New York are:

The Cortland County Industrial Development Agency in NY has been selected to receive \$500,000. The grant will be used to assess 18 sites, develop cleanup plans and engage the community in the City of Cortland and the Village of Homer. Key sites targeted for assessment include a former metal manufacturing facility, an old armory and a vacant paint company in Cortland, and a textile plant, industrial site and two fuel stations in Homer.

The City of Binghamton, NY has been selected to receive \$500,000. The grant will be used to assess and prioritize polluted sites in the North Chenango River Corridor and the First Ward Neighborhood. This includes engaging with the community. Key sites targeted for assessment include a vacant former wire manufacturing site, a former gasoline station, a parcel with dilapidated multi-family homes, and an unsecured site with a former industrial building and residences.

The Mohawk Valley Economic Development Growth Enterprises Corporation (Mohawk Valley EDGE) in NY has been selected to receive \$1,000,000 for its existing Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program.

photographs, illustrations and personal stories from travelers and tavern keepers, Palmer brings this era to life.

Sunday, June 1

CORTLAND — Celebrate summer like it's 1890 at the 1890 House at 37 Tompkins St., Cortland, from noon to 4 p.m., complete with games for kids, strawberry shortcake and plenty of sweet treats. Jazz Happens will perform live.

Tuesday, June 3

CORTLAND — The Cortland County Dairy Parade, Central New York's premier dairy celebration, returns at 6:30 p.m., rain or shine. This decades-long tradition has honored hardworking dairy farmers with

By LAUREN ROYCE

For the Cortland Standard

CORTLAND — The Center for the Arts of Homer will be putting on some performances in the near future.

"We've had a very vibrant, great concert season," said Ty Marshal, executive director of the arts center. "A lot of great artists have come through, and we were excited to see so many audience members coming out. We also had a musical — and of course our classes, workshops and programs, a couple gallery openings. All of the wonderful things the center loves serving the community with."

The Cortland Standard shut down on March 13, leaving local businesses and organizations without their usual advertising spaces and no local coverage of their events. Marshal said he and the center were glad to hear of the paper's return.

"We were all kind of aggrieved that the Cortland Standard had closed," Marshal said. "We believe that a daily newspaper is really the lifeblood of a community. It does everything from letting you know what events are coming, to holding our elected officials accountable, to letting you know about other events and programs that are being offered in the community. So it was a sad day when we heard that it closed, but we're overjoyed that the Cortland Standard is back."

Starting Thursday and running through Sunday, the arts center will be showing "Irene," an original play by Greg Moller.

On May 22, there will be

Cayuga County hosting lead abatement training

The Cayuga County Health Department is hosting a free Environmental Protection Agency Lead Abatement Worker training course from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. June 16 and 17.



PAUL CIFONELLI/Managing editor

The Center for the Arts of Homer has a few performances and events scheduled for the upcoming months.

a showing of "Dark Side of the Rainbow," where "The Wizard of Oz" film will be synched to Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon" album, so the music can act as a backdrop.

The event is in partnership with Classy Canna, he said.

Marshal said that on May 30 and 31, the arts center will be partnering with Parents Families &

Friends of LGBTQ+ People (PFLAG) to kick off pride month with a showing of Jack Carr's "Everybody's Favorite Mothers." The program tells the story of how PFLAG formed. There will be a showing at 7 p.m. May 30 and two showings, one at 2 p.m. and one at 7 p.m., on May 31.

An exhibition of artworks by current artist-in-residence Minna Resnick

The course lasts two days, with June 17 picking up where the training was left off at the end of the day June 16.

The course will be instructed by Eco-Testing Ser-

vices, LLC.

Individuals who pass the course will receive a six-month interim certification. During that time, certified workers can perform abatement activities while

is also on display now through June 27, Marshal said.

"It's a portal to feed our souls," Marshal said of the arts center. "At least, that's how we like to think about it."

Marshal said there are also updates on the art center's ongoing project with the former Calvary Episcopal Church.

"We are currently in the contract process for that grant and finishing up the contract, which we're working with the state officials to get that completed, and local officials as well," Marshal said. "Once that's done, we will have a construction schedule before us."

"The idea is to kind of utilize it as a community center as well, a community and cultural center," he added.

It is the oldest church building on the Village Green in Homer. It might take two to three years to be ready for occupancy, he said, but it's supposed to act as a cornerstone of the community.

The Landmark Society of Homer, Seven Valleys Health Coalition and Cortland Collective Impact Initiatives are also helping support the project, Marshal said.

The farmers market will eventually be moved there but, as of now, the arts center is partnered with the Homer Regional Farmers Market to host the market on the center's front lawn from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays starting May 24.

Cortland Calendar

Saturday, May 24

HOMER — The Homer Regional Farmers Market will be from 9 a.m. to noon on the lawn of the Center for the Arts of Homer at 72 S. Main St. Stock up on farm-fresh produce, artisan goods and treats while enjoying live music.

Saturday, May 31

CORTLAND — Stagecoach and Tavern Days Around Cortland featuring presentation and book signing by author Richard F. Palmer at 1 p.m. at the Central New York Living History Center, 4386 US Route 11, Cortland. Learn about Cortland County's early transportation systems and how they shaped the area's development. Through his collection of

fun, festive floats, lively music and unforgettable moments. Register online at forms.gle/qKuWEmuHwtw4xD2A8.

Thursday, June 5

CORTLAND — Odd Thursday's Open Mic is set for 7 p.m. at the Ake Gallery, located at 165 Main St., Cortland. The event features stand-up and live music the first and third Thursdays of each month.

Saturday, June 7

CORTLAND — The Cortland County Fairgrounds, located at 4301 Fairgrounds Dr., Cortland, will host a free pet fair from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Shop pet goodies and meet local groomers, vets and kennels. Enjoy an afternoon of pets on parade, face painting, best dog tricks, pony rides and more.

CORTLAND — The 34th Annual Cortland County Water Festival will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Cortland Water Works on Broadway Street in Cortland. The event will feature an assortment of educational, water-related activities and displays including horse drawn tours of the Water Works. Kids can also play games, get their faces painted, blow bubbles, join the duck races and play the Water Wizard Game. Cortland County Soil & Water Conservation District's mascot, Ronny Raindrop,

will be there. The event is free for the public to attend and is sponsored by the City of Cortland Water Department and Department of Public Works, Cortland County Health Department, Cornell Cooperative Extension, W2O Operator Training Group and the Cortland County Soil & Water Conservation District.

CORTLAND — The feast of St. Anthony of Padua Parish will celebrate with a weekend full of fun, flavor and community spirit at 50 Pomeroy St. Expect fireworks that light up the night sky, a parade full of hometown pride and nonstop music. There will be games, rides and activities for all ages. Food will range from Italian favorites to classic festival treats.

CORTLAND — Women Veterans Recognition Day will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Central New York Living History Center, 4386 US Route 11, Cortland. Alice Anderson, a retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel, will facilitate a conversation about experiences of serving in the military. Admission is free for all women who have served in the armed forces in any capacity and their guest and all veterans with proper identification. The general public is welcome to attend. Refreshments will be served.

Saturday, June 14

CINCINNATUS — Cincinnati Yard Sale Days will feature country roads brimming with yard sales. The Cincinnati Fire Department will serve breakfast sandwiches in the morning and hot lunch in the afternoon.

CORTLAND — Celebrate the life of Michael "Buzzy" Andersen during his Viking 5K Memorial Run from 10 a.m. to noon starting at 21 Court St., Cortland. He served 22 years at the Cortland City Fire Department and 15 years as a fire investigator. Andersen succumbed to job-related cancer on Feb. 7, 2024. One of his true passions in life was being a competitive athlete, as he was an avid runner and canoeist. He helped coordinate and certify many races and initiated the Cortland Pumpkin Run. The race starts at 10 a.m. Check-in time is 9 a.m.

Thursday, June 26

CORTLAND — ComedyFLOPs presents All You Can Eat Improv, a live, entirely made-up show based on audience suggestions from 7 to 9 p.m. This event will raise money to support the non-profit JM Murray Center. The suggested donation is \$5.

Friday, June 27

CORTLAND — Movie Under the Stars, presented by the Cortland Youth

Bureau, will be held at Yaman Beach. Pack blankets, bring lawn chairs and enjoy Moana 2 under the night sky. All movies begin at dusk.

Saturday, July 5

PREBLE — Celebrate America's Independence in Cortland County with the return of fireworks at Dwyer Memorial Park in Preble. There will be live music, food and family fun. Food vendors will be on-site, as well as a beer and wine garden alongside a full lineup of local bands. The music will begin at 2 p.m. Admission is free, with a \$5 per car parking fee that will begin at 8 a.m. The event is sponsored by Cortland County.

CINCINNATUS — The Cincinnati Rodeo will be held starting at noon at 5703 State Route 23.

Saturday, July 26

CORTLAND — The Downtown is Done 1-Mile Fun Run will be held to celebrate the end of construction on Main Street, Cortland. The last day to register for the race is at noon July 25. Check-in time is 5 p.m. and the race starts at 6 p.m. Check-in will close 15 minutes before the run starts on Court Street. The course features a large loop through the side streets of downtown Cortland. Sign up online at runsignup.com/Race/NY/Cortland/DowntownFunRunMile.

Cortland Standard

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STEVE FEATHERSTONE/SYRACUSE.COM

A juvenile lake sturgeon raised at the Oneida Fish Culture Station in Constantia. Lake sturgeon are a threatened species in NY, but are close to recovery thanks to a 30 year stocking effort.

Endangered species list in NY gets first update since 1999

DEC adds 16 imperiled fish to list

By STEVE FEATHERSTONE
syracuse.com (TNS)

Grieve for the gravel chub. Mourn the mud sunfish. Say sayonara to the spoonhead sculpin. And pour one out for the lake chubsucker.

Once native to New York, these four fish no longer live here according to a recently updated list of imperiled species compiled by the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

DEC's website has the full list of NY's endangered, threatened, and special concern fish and wildlife species. For the list, go to <https://tinyurl.com/27n52k7x>.

In 1999, the last time DEC updated the list, these fish were classified as either threatened or endangered, the latter being the most serious level reserved for animals on the verge of being extirpated from the Empire State.

Extirpated doesn't mean extinct, however. Healthy populations of these fish can be still found outside New York.

But their new DEC designation was a long time coming.

Nobody in NY has laid eyes on a lake chubsucker, for example, since 1939.

But the stubby, olive-green fish—not to be confused with smaller creek chubsucker—is still abundant just over the Canadian border in Lyons Creek, south of Niagara Falls.

Same goes for the spoonhead sculpin, a cold-water species once found in Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. It hasn't been seen around these parts since Harry S. Truman was president.

Disappearing burbot

The status of eight fish on the list remains unchanged, and only two — the gilt dart-

er and silver chub — are classified as endangered, as they were in 1999.

DEC's updated list contains 16 new fish species, mostly minnows with colorful names like the swallowtail shiner or tonguetied minnow.

But more familiar species such as the American eel, lake whitefish, and burbot also made the list for the first time.

The majority of these newcomers are species of special concern, the lowest level of classification. Their declines are often linked to climate change and invasive species, DEC said.

Lisa Holst, a DEC rare fish biologist who helped draft the new regulations, pointed to the burbot, the only freshwater species of cod, as a good example of a fish with a dim future in New York thanks to global warming.

Once common to Oneida Lake, anglers often regarded burbot as a trash fish and discarded them on the ice to die.

But burbot are all but gone from Oneida Lake now, Holst said, and their numbers are declining across the state due to warming waters.

"Burbot are a cold-water species," Holst said. "And places like Oneida Lake now gets very, very warm in the summer and even stays kind of warm through the winter."

On the plus side

A critter can leave DEC's list in two ways: disappear from within state boundaries, like the lake chubsucker, or recover to the point it no longer requires protection.

On the plus side, three fish — black redbhorse, mountain brook lamprey, and stream-line chub — were dropped from the list because they've been doing just fine since 1999.

Things also got better over the past two decades for six other species, including the bluebreast darter, pugnose shiner, and round whitefish.

DEC credits improvements in water quality, habitat protection, and targeted stocking programs for these success stories.

Likewise, the decline of many fish species can be chalked up to poor water quality and habitat destruction.

An important regulatory tool

The updated list of endangered fish is the first in a series of regulations DEC is working on over the next two years to update the conservation status of all the state's endangered and threatened native species, including birds, mammals, and insects.

"We look at historic data and the present-day data," Holst said. "The data comes from our own staff. It also comes from a number of partners, universities, private consulting firms, and the federal government as well."

DEC's endangered species list is an important regulatory tool for safeguarding the state's biodiversity. A protected species cannot be harvested or harassed, and its habitat cannot be destroyed, without a permit.

"Say we're working with a town, or the state Department of Transportation, and they're working on a bridge for a stream crossing," Holst said. "Can the bridge be moved? Can the work be moved to a different time of year when the fish won't be present?"

In addition to issuing permits, DEC has other ways to protect endangered species. Statewide enforcement of

keystone conservation laws like the Clean Water Act is critical, but DEC also improves local habitats on a project basis.

"If a species needs gravel to breed on, or if it needs weeds to hide in, we can try to improve the habitat itself," Holst said. "We can reconnect sections of rivers if there are dams or culverts."

Through the Bureau of Fisheries, the state also operates 12 fish hatcheries, "some of which actually help us raise these rare and endangered species," Holst said.

The Oneida Fish Culture Station in Constantia is well known as the state's primary walleye hatchery. But it also raises lake sturgeon, a threatened species that is now close to recovery after 30 years of stocking efforts.

Unintended consequences
In the grand scheme of things, it would be easy to dismiss the loss of a few obscure minnow species.

After all, the popular sportfish that sell fishing licenses and fishing gear, like walleye, bass, and trout, are all doing fine.

But ecosystems are vastly complex. Removing one species, no matter how small or insignificant it might seem, can have unintended consequences.

Minnows, for instance, eat phytoplankton. If we don't protect them, we could end up with more frequent harmful algal blooms, Holst said, or create niches for invasive species to exploit.

"We're protecting these things for the people of the state of New York," Holst said. "We're the trustees of these resources that are here for you today, but also for your children and your children's children."

Muir appears at Ithaca College commencement

By GEOFF HERBERT

syracuse.com (TNS)

ITHACA — Syracuse native David Muir made a surprise appearance at his alma mater over the weekend.

The "ABC World News Tonight with David Muir" anchor, who also co-anchors ABC's "20/20," surprised Ithaca College graduates Sunday during their commencement ceremony by introducing keynote speaker Bob Iger, the CEO of the Walt Disney Company. Muir and Iger are both alumni of the Central New York school.

"My visit here today is driven by two things," Muir said. "Obviously the energy of all of you in this room, your families who love you and have helped you get to this moment. And I'm here obviously for my friend and mentor, fellow Ithaca College alum Bob Iger."

According to Ithaca College, Muir's appearance was a "tightly held secret," surprising both the class of 2025 and Iger himself.

Iger, who earned his television-radio degree from Ithaca College in 1973, is the chairman and chief executive officer of the Walt Disney Company, which owns ABC. Iger was previously ABC's president and actually retired from Disney in 2021, but returned a year later at the request of the company's board of directors. His career includes multi-billion-dollar acquisitions of Pixar in 2006, Marvel Entertainment in 2009, Lucasfilm in 2012, and 21st Century Fox assets in 2019, plus work with streaming services Disney+ and Hulu.

"You all grew up with Disney as part of the culture and your parents did, and your grandparents did," Muir said. "And his tenure as CEO—now twice—has been defined by fearless choices, being brave, always looking to the future...growing Disney, embracing technology, and doing this all while protecting what's true to Disney, the storytelling that has defined Disney from the very beginning. And he's also done this by remaining true to himself."

"Like all of you graduating here in this room today, Bob too was shaped by the beauty of this wonderful college on a hill. And by the basic sense of human decency that we celebrate at Ithaca College. He never forgot who he was, which has made him one of the most accessible, most honest, most impressive CEOs of our time. He is the same person he has always been, and that is the magic of Bob Iger."

Iger, who received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree at the ceremony, said he felt like he never left Ithaca, calling it "the springboard to my journey." He also offered advice to the graduating students.

"Have dreams. And if they do not come true, have others. To all of you, remain hopeful and always optimistic," Iger said. "Those traits will fuel you, I promise. And they will create opportunities. And today you will leave the home that has been yours for the last four years. I know that's kind of sad in a way, maybe bitter-sweet, but don't feel sad, because if you've loved this home, you'll take some of it with you wherever you go. I know that I did."

Muir has anchored "World News Tonight" since Diane Sawyer retired in 2014, leading the ABC program to become the most-watched evening newscast for seven years in a row and No. 1 in all key target demographics. The former anchor and reporter at Syracuse's WTVH (now part of CNY Central) graduated from Onondaga Central High School and Ithaca College.

Muir has stayed close to his roots. He was the commencement speaker at Syracuse University in 2022 and owns a home in Skaneateles.

"I'm no different from the intern in Syracuse who then became the rookie reporter in Syracuse," Muir told syracuse.com in 2016. "I think the sensibilities of having grown up in Upstate New York and the concerns, the fears, the hopes of the people there are reflected all over the country. And that still drives me to this day."

New York child tax credit is getting bigger

By KEVIN TAMPONE

syracuse.com (TNS)

New York is expanding its child tax credit.

The state passed the expansion as part of the budget process, which just wrapped up earlier in May.

To get the credit, you need to have been a full-year resident of New York state or married to a full-year resident. Kids under 17 years old qualify.

You claim the credit when filing your taxes each year. So the next time to get it will be in 2026 when filing taxes for the 2025 year.

There are also income limits. For a married couple filing jointly, the upper income limit is \$110,000.

The child tax credit starts to phase out after that.

Here's what to know

about the expansion:

Kids up to 3 years old are eligible for a maximum credit of \$1,000. The previous maximum was \$330.

Kids from ages 4 to 16 qualify for \$500. The old maximum was also \$330 for them.

The state also tweaked a provision that had prevented New Yorkers with the lowest incomes from getting the credit.

Middle-class New Yorkers whose incomes were previously too high to get the credit will also now qualify.

The eligibility changes will allow 187,000 more people to get the benefit, according to Gov. Kathy Hochul's office.

The average size of the credit going to families will increase from \$472 to \$943, according to Hochul's office.

N.Y. power grid prepared for summer

Officials expect supply will be more than adequate

ALBANY — New York's electric grid and its electric utilities are prepared to meet increased summer demand for electricity, state Public Service Commission officials said in a news release.

New York is expected to have a ready supply of electricity during the summer peak due in large part to significant energy efficiency investments that have been made the officials said.

"New York is expected to have an ample supply of energy this year, and that is good news for residential and business customers," said Commission Chair Rory M. Christian. "Meanwhile, we will continue making investments in energy efficiency and the clean-energy grid that will help us all combat climate change, meet demand on the system, and further stabilize energy prices long term."

New York State set a record peak demand of 33,955 mega-

watts in summer 2013. Peak demand this summer is forecast to be 31,471 MW, higher than last year's actual peak of 28,990 MW.

The installed generating capacity for 2025 totals 37,682 MW, while adding the installed generation capacity with other resources provides New York with a total of 40,938 MW worth of capacity resources for 2025, well above the expected need.

The peak forecasts for the coming years see a steady increase overall due to electrification and future large loads.

But the combined effect of the energy efficiency and distributed generation are projected to help lower the peak demand by 5,600 MW by 2035.

A 2,000 MW decrease in peak demand is the equivalent of the electricity generated by several large power plants, enough to supply approximately 1.75 million

average-size homes. Reducing the amount of electricity consumed daily and during the hottest days of summer provides significant benefits to consumers and the environment.

The price for electricity paid by full-service residential customers on average is expected to be higher than a year ago, depending on the customer's location, demand and actual market prices. The Commission also discussed the extreme heat event protections the utilities have adopted over recent years.

The statewide average supply costs for full service residential customers this summer (June to September) is expected to be approximately \$231, up nearly 6.5 percent from \$217 a year ago.

This increase in the 2025 supply bill estimates as compared to 2024 reflects the expected changes in market prices as well as the impact

from the utilities' hedging programs.

Supply prices rise and fall all the time based on changing market conditions, and they are expected to be higher this year due to expected increased gas market prices compared to last year. Electricity follows gas because it is the primary fuel used to generate electricity.

Electricity prices will be comparable to what they were in 2022, even excluding inflationary increases over the past three years.

The cost of electricity is determined largely by unregulated supply and demand in the energy and capacity markets. Depending on where a customer is located in the state, what utility they are served by, their actual use, and actual market prices, the commodity portion of their summer bill will vary, and could be higher or lower than last summer.

Obituaries

Leesa Ann Ferris

Leesa Ann Ferris passed away peacefully on May 14, 2025, surrounded by her family.

She was born in 1949, the eldest of three daughters, to parents Lester and Ruth Erdige. She grew up on her family's dairy farm in Oneida.

After receiving degrees from D'Youville College in Buffalo and Kent State University in Ohio, Leesa taught in Ohio before moving to Homer in 1987, where she taught in the Homer Central School District.

Leesa was a tireless advocate for education and literacy. She taught at SUNY Cortland, helping train new teachers to be effective in a changing world. She was a volunteer tutor for adults with reading difficulties.

Leesa was a member of the Seenightly, Ladies Literary Club, and the CARTA Book Club, where she enjoyed the company of good friends. Among her favorite activities were gardening, playing cards, reading, volunteering, and participating in classes at the YWCA.

She loved spending time with her friends; her sister, Susan (Ray) Holz; her children, Amy (Steven) Denkenberger, Megan (John) Kruger, and Courtney (Justin) Slater; and her grandchildren, Natasha, Zoë, Isadora, Amelia, Aiden, and Eleanor.

Calling hours will be held on Saturday, May 31, 2025, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. at the Donald L. Barber Funeral Home, 5016 U.S. Route 11, Homer. A time of sharing will begin at 2:30 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be directed to the YWCA Cortland, 14 Clayton Ave., Cortland, NY 13045, Hospicare & Palliative Care Services, 11 Kennedy Parkway, Cortland, NY 13045, or to the charity of your choice.

Memorial condolences for the family may be left at www.DonaldLBarberFuneralHome.com.

Stephen D. Butts

Mr. Stephen D. Butts, 82, of Scott Road, Homer, passed away on May 12, 2025.

Mr. Butts was born April 16, 1943, a son of the late George and Margaret Davis Butts. He was a graduate of Homer High School and Cornell's Agriculture and Life Sciences School.

Following college, Steve pursued his dream of becoming a dairy farmer and continued living that dream for his entire life while residing at his home on the farm. Steve, "Wilbur", started working on Wilbur Forbes's dairy farm in 1962. He purchased 10 registered Holsteins from Mr. Forbes in 1964 to start his own herd, and purchased the farm from the Forbes Family in 1972. His son, Chad, joined the business in 2000, and they expanded to form Willow Breeze Farm.

Steve valued the agricultural community and history of Homer Grange Hall #834. In his later years, he enjoyed sharing his lifelong knowledge of the region with the many visitors to the sweet corn and pumpkin stand. He became the "ambassador" for Cortland County and all the beauty and tranquility that it offers.

As an avid outdoorsman, Steve enjoyed deer hunting, turkey hunting and pheasant hunting. He enjoyed fishing with friends on Skaneateles Lake, Lake Ontario and especially with his grandkids at the pond on the farm. Steve was instrumental in the inception of Quality Deer Management in his surrounding area and treasured the beautiful view of wildlife from his front porch. He frequently would say, "I have the best view in the world from my front porch and why would I want to live anywhere else?"

Steve served on the board at Atwater Cemetery for several years and was a commissioner for the Town of Homer Fire Department District. Steve enjoyed gatherings with friends and family at his camp on Skaneateles Lake. He was a longtime Syracuse Basketball fan and season ticket holder starting with the opening of the Dome in 1980.

Steve shared his lifelong passions, interests and knowledge with his children, grandchildren, family and friends. Introducing them to nature, sports and the appreciation of the surroundings helped instill the same passion and knowledge into them.

Surviving are his children, Kelly (Jody) Crawford of Tully and Chad (Kimberly) Butts of Homer; four grandchildren, Ashleigh and Joe Crawford and Elyse and Evan Butts; a brother, Greg (Ann) Butts of Little Rock, AR; and several nieces, nephews and cousins. Steve cherished his lifelong relationships with the Hill and Payne families.

Steve was predeceased by his wife, Karen Hill Butts, in 1989.

In keeping with Steve's wishes, services will be held privately and at the convenience of the family.

Memorial contributions may be directed to the Homer Fire Department, P.O. Box 58, Homer, NY 13077.

Memorial condolences for the family may be left at www.DonaldLBarberFuneralHome.com.



What's Intriguing

Is killing Florida bears a good way to control them?

By **STEPHEN HUDAK**
Orlando Sentinel (TNS)

Following Florida's first fatal bear attack this spring, there's little argument that the state's largest land mammal can be dangerous. But fierce debate persists over whether a good way to control bears is to kill them.

A state plan to resume bear hunting after a decade-long hibernation has deepened the discord in advance of a pivotal meeting of Florida's Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, a seven-member board appointed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. Supporters suggest thinning the bear population is a "science-based" approach to wildlife management, while foes note the last hunt in 2015 was little short of a management disaster.

The board meets Wednesday at the College of Central Florida in Ocala with options for an annual bear "harvest," the agency's term for a hunt, headlining the agenda.

FWC has logged more than 13,000 public comments about the hunt — 75% in opposition. The Orlando Sentinel reviewed hundreds of emailed comments to gauge the disagreement, then interviewed some of their authors.

"We have lots of bears. I feel like they're definitely overpopulated in our area," said Windy Johnson, 49, a school teacher and hunt proponent who lives on 100 acres in Wakulla County, south of Tallahassee. "At certain times they're so bad, you can drive down any road on any day at any time and see them. Folks can't keep them out of their trash."

Hunt advocates suggest a limited bear season would deter run-ins between the animals and people.

But bear defenders argue that people have encroached into bear habitat — not the other way around.

Karen Murray, an Orlando resident who described herself as a hiker and wildlife lover in an email opposing the hunt, said bear-resistant trash containers have proven to be effective in thwarting bear incursions into neighborhoods.

Employing that strategy, Seminole County has greatly diminished its state-leading number of bear-human encounters in recent years, even as conflicts have risen elsewhere in the state as bears have expanded their range.

Murray urged FWC to focus on "humane, non-lethal strategies."



ROGER SIMMONS/Orlando Sentinel/TNS

A black bear sits in an oak tree at Lake Eola Park in the heart of downtown Orlando, Florida, on Sunday morning, June 4, 2023. Orlando Police taped off the area and were awaiting officials from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Many opposed to the hunt were terse.

"Lets not kill them, please," wrote Richard Baker, who chairs an Audubon chapter in Indian River County.

"Unneeded, unwanted, solve's nothing, stop the consideration of this (hunt)," read another.

"The last 'highly regulated' bear hunt resulted in cubs shot and mother bears shot. This is an unnecessary effort to sanction more unnecessary killings. NO," wrote Carolyn Kieker of Deland.

Pro-hunt emails called the state's black bear population "unmanaged," described it as "well above the carrying capacity," and blamed the rising bruin population for increased reports of conflicts and bear-vehicle collisions.

Those emails — many using identical language — claimed about 2,700 bears have been killed by vehicles over the last decade.

Some favoring a hunt cited the grisly death of an 89-year-old man, killed and partially eaten this month along with his dog by a 263-pound bear in Collier County in southwest Florida. FWC dubbed it the first fatal bear attack in Florida history.

Brent Palmer, 53, who lived in 10 states while serving in the U.S. military, said he has hunted bear in three states, Colorado, Montana and New York, and frequently crosses paths with them while hunting in Florida's Panhandle.

"I am 100% behind science-based hunting, fishing, and trapping regulations that allow the proper balance between animal populations and harvesting without de-

grading those populations," he said. "I am for a regulated bear hunt and expect the FWC biologists to determine the best numbers of bears based on habitat and other factors."

But he also said Florida's last hunt was "a debacle," and he understands why the public might worry now.

In 2015, 304 bears were killed in just two days after permits were distributed to anyone who paid. Amid the chaos, the state shut down the hunt five days early, fearful that the death toll would soar past the harvest limit of 320.

Under the proposed rules, permits would be issued this time through a random drawing.

Eligible persons could apply an unlimited number of times, but each entry would cost \$5.

Only one "bear harvest" permit would be awarded per person.

A permit would cost \$100 for a Florida resident, \$300 for a nonresident.

In public hearings last month, FWC staff suggested a target take of fewer than 200 bears.

According to a document on the FWC agenda, George Warthen, the agency's chief conservation officer, will tell the board most U.S. states and Canadian provinces with black bears allow hunts "and their populations are stable or increasing."

Of the six states that don't allow bear hunting, Florida is estimated to have the most bears, over 4,000.

FWC divides the state into seven geographical bear

management zones, but would allow hunting in just four, because the other three have fewer than 200 bears, including one estimated to have 98 and another with just 30.

The Central zone, which includes Orange, Lake, Osceola and Seminole counties, has the largest estimated population of bears — nearly 1,200, by FWC's guess. A more precise survey of the region's bear population is to be conducted next year.

As in 2015, the proposed bear hunting rules would forbid killing of cubs — defined as weighing less than 100 lbs — or females with cubs. Bear advocates insist hunters killed lactating female bears and bears qualified as cubs.

The newly proposed rules don't include FWC check-in stations where hunters in 2015 were required to bring their kills. Those stations provided verification that bears were taken legally and were also monitored independently by animal-welfare volunteers, who were credited by environmental groups with helping to stop the hunt early.

Instead of the stations, hunters would be required to provide details to the state within 24 hours of harvest. The corpses of harvested bears would be subject to inspection, but the rules don't clarify how that would happen.

A brain pathway linking cannabis use, psychosis at center of new study

By **HANNA WEBSTER**
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

Amid continued conversations about legalizing cannabis in Pennsylvania comes new research suggesting a potential brain pathway involved in cannabis use disorder and psychosis.

It's one of the first studies to suggest a specific brain pathway for cannabis use disorder, or problematic use of cannabis that impairs daily life, which has been increasing in the past couple of decades as the drug becomes more widely available and the concentration of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the plant's psychoactive component, increases.

Published in JAMA Psychiatry last month, the study imaged the brains of people with and without cannabis use disorder (CUD), some being treated for psychosis. Researchers found that those with CUD had stronger signals in portions of the substantia nigra, a brain



TOM GRALISH/The Philadelphia Inquirer/TNS

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro has said he favors legalizing cannabis.

region important for dopamine release and previously linked to psychosis symptoms.

The results of the research, led by scientists at McGill University in Canada, do not mean cannabis causes all people to experience psychosis, but point to a poten-

tial mechanism for why cannabis may induce psychosis in some people.

"This study may instill fear in some people," said Jessica Ahrens, a PhD candidate at McGill interested in schizophrenia and lead author on the paper. "And that's really not my goal."

One 2015 study that looked at cannabis use disorder in 2001 and 2013 found the incidence of the condition more than doubled over that timespan. More recently, the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), found that 16.6% of people ages 18 to 35 had the condition.

Area physicians have seen an increase in both CUD and cannabis-induced psychosis.

"We don't have clear data on the number of cannabis-induced psychosis cases here in Pittsburgh, but we have a trend towards seeing more people who use cannabis developing psychotic manifestations, particularly adolescents and young people," Antoine Douaihy, professor of psychiatry and medicine at Pitt and a physician, said in an email statement.

White House pushes for quick approval of 'big, beautiful bill'

By MICHAEL WILNER
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

WASHINGTON — House Republican leadership is pressing ahead toward a vote on landmark legislation that would codify President Donald Trump's agenda this week, the first major push to pass Trump's "big, beautiful bill" since he resumed office.

The bill would overhaul the tax code and extend many of the tax cuts passed during Trump's first term, while increasing spending on defense and border security — costly policies that would be offset by new work requirements and conditions on Medicaid, cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, and the phasing out of green energy tax credits.

Success is far from guaranteed for House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., who is navigating negotiations with fiscal conservatives and coastal moderates within his caucus to secure enough votes within his razor-thin majority.

But the bill did take one procedural step forward Sunday night, clearing the bill through the House Budget Committee in a rare weekend vote.

Four members of that committee voted "present" and have not committed to ultimately vote in favor of the bill. Those four alone — Freedom Caucus members Rep. Chip Roy of Texas, Andrew Clyde of Georgia, Josh Brecheen of Oklahoma and Ralph Norman of South Carolina — are enough to sink the bill in a final floor vote.

More moderate Republican lawmakers from states like California, New York and New Jersey, where residents face higher state and local taxes than in much of the rest of the country, are

pushing for an increase in the state and local tax deduction cap, known as SALT, to be included in the bill — a provision that is opposed by the Freedom Caucus.

They also are pushing back against efforts to wind down green energy tax credits that are popular with their constituents.

The Congressional Budget Office issued a preliminary estimate that new conditions to Medicaid coverage built into the bill would result in at least 7.6 million people losing health insurance by 2034.

The CBO has yet to release a full assessment of the bill's effect on the debt and deficit.

Johnson has said that the bill will go to the House Rules Committee on Tuesday or Wednesday. He then aims to put the bill to a vote on the House floor on Thursday.

The White House has been involved in the negotiations in recent days.

"Passing this bill is what voters sent Republicans to Washington to accomplish," Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, said Monday. "That's why it's essential that every Republican in the House and Senate unites behind President Trump to pass this popular and transformative legislative package."

Even if Johnson succeeds in passing the legislation, the bill will then move to a Senate filled with Republicans who have expressed skepticism of the House legislation.

"Not only myself, but a number of us in the Senate have been very clear: We have to reduce the deficit," Republican Sen. John Curtis of Utah said in an interview with CNN. Asked if he wants serious changes to the House bill, Curtis said, "Yes."



EILEEN T. MESLAR/Chicago Tribune/TNS

Former President Joe Biden speaks during the Advocates, Counselors, and Representatives for the Disabled bipartisan conference at the Sofitel Chicago Magnificent Mile on April 15.

Biden sends emotional message after cancer news

By DAVE GOLDINER
New York Daily News (TNS)

Former President Joe Biden Monday sent an emotional first message after being diagnosed with an "aggressive" form of prostate cancer that has already spread to his bones.

"Cancer touches us all," Biden tweeted, sharing a photo with his wife, Jill Biden. "Like so many of you, Jill and I have learned that we are strongest in the broken places."

"Thank you for lifting us up with love and support," he added.

Biden, 82, has been flooded with messages of support from political allies and rivals alike since his office announced the grim news on Sunday.

The 46th president,

who ended his reelection campaign amid concerns about his age and fitness for office, is resting at home in Wilmington, Delaware, as he discusses treatment options with doctors and relatives.

Biden's old boss, ex-President Barack Obama, sent well wishes along, as did Biden's own former vice president, Kamala Harris. President Donald Trump set politics aside to issue his hopes for a full recovery.

The health scare unfolded after doctors found a "small nodule" on Biden's prostate last week during an examination prompted by his complaints about urinary symptoms.

Biden was handed the bad news on Friday that

he has metastatic prostate cancer, and the cancer has already spread to his bones.

Under the Gleason score system used to measure severity of cancers, Biden's case was labeled a 9, the second worst on the scale that runs from 6 to 10, which would be the worst possible diagnosis.

The scale score measures the virulence of cancerous cells and tissues in the body, with a higher score meaning the cancer is more likely to spread quickly, as Biden's has already done.

Biden was at greater risk for prostate cancer due to his age.

Biden's doctors say his prostate cancer is "hormone-sensitive," meaning it may be eas-

ier to treat by reducing the hormones it uses to spread.

Biden's health and fitness for office were major talking points during the 2024 presidential race, hand he was effectively forced out of the race after a dismal debate performance against Trump.

He was the oldest president in American history, though Trump will surpass that mark if he serves out his current term.

A forthcoming book from CNN anchor Jake Tapper and Alex Thompson of Axios says Biden aides and top Democratic leaders covered up Biden's decline in an ultimately doomed effort to win four more years in the White House.

JD Vance: Biden diagnosis raises new questions about fitness

By DAVE GOLDINER
New York Daily News (TNS)

Vice President JD Vance on Monday said former President Joe Biden's prostate cancer diagnosis raises new questions about whether he was fit to serve in the White House.

Breaking with widespread sympathy for Biden across the political spectrum, Vance said the grim news should serve as a springboard to a renewed investigation into Biden's health while he

was serving as president.

"Whether the right time to have this conversation is now or at some point in the future, we really do need to be honest about whether the former president was capable of doing the job," Vance told reporters as he flew back to the United States from the Vatican.

Vance claimed he was not taking a political stand by suggesting the newly revealed cancer diagnosis could shed some light on Biden's condition

during his term that ended in January.

"I don't think he was able to do a good job for the American people," Vance said. "And that's not politics. That's not because I disagreed with him on policy. In some ways, I blame him less than I blame the people around him."

The vice president suggested Biden aides and supporters might have known more about the president's health woes or fitness than has been

revealed.

"Why didn't the American people have more accurate information about what he was actually dealing with? This is serious stuff," Vance said. "We can pray for good health. But also recognize that if you're not in good enough health to do the job, you shouldn't be doing the job."

Vance's sharp-elbowed comments came in contrast to the traditional straightforward statements of sympathy for

Biden from President Donald Trump and most Republican leaders, including some fierce critics of Biden.

Trump, who has been harshly critical of Biden since winning a return to the White House for a second term, simply wrote on his social media site that he and first lady Melania Trump "wish Joe a fast and successful recovery."

Biden's health was a major talking point in the 2024 presidential cam-

paign, and he was effectively forced out of the race by fellow Democrats after a dismal early debate performance against Trump last summer.

A forthcoming book from CNN anchor Jake Tapper and Alex Thompson of Axios says Biden aides and top Democratic leaders covered up Biden's decline in an ultimately doomed effort to win four more years in the White House.

7 men still at large after New Orleans jailbreak



Kendell Myles was captured after escaping from a New Orleans jail.

By JOSEPH WILKINSON
New York Daily News (TNS)

Seven of the 10 men who busted out of a New Orleans jail remained at large Monday as a statewide manhunt entered its fourth day.

The reward for tips leading to their recapture was raised to \$20,000 per person on Sunday as federal and state authorities pleaded for the public's help in the case.

"We hope that in the coming days, if not the coming hours, that we have them all apprehended," Louisiana State Police top cop Robert Hodges said at a Sunday press conference. "But we need the public's help." Investigators said they

had leads on all seven men, but none had panned out by Monday afternoon.

Three men who escaped the Orleans Parish jail early Friday morning had already been rearrested, one of which was aided by tips from the public, authorities said.

But while Kendell Myles, Robert Moody, and Dkenan Dennis were nabbed by Saturday night, Corey Boyd, Leo Tate, Jermaine Donald, Derrick Groves, Lenton Vanburen, Antoine T. Massey and Gary C. Price remained at large Monday.

Donald, 42, had been charged with second-degree murder, and Price,

21, was accused of attempted first-degree murder. Groves, 27, had already pleaded guilty to manslaughter in connection with a shooting that killed two people during Mardi Gras in 2018.

Officials said the men likely had outside and inside help to get out of the jail.

Three Orleans Parish sheriff's employees were suspended without pay shortly after the jailbreak. Police said anyone found aiding the seven men in their escape would also face charges.

"These are violent offenders who need to be put back into police custody immediately," Gov. Jeff Landry said Sunday.

China-US trade truce prompts other nations to consider tougher tactics

By KATIA DMITRIEVA

Bloomberg News (TNS)

China's defiant stance in negotiating a tariff truce with the U.S. has convinced some countries they need to take a tougher position in their own trade talks with the Trump administration.

The pause reached a week ago gave structure to what promise to be prolonged and difficult rounds of talks between Washington and Beijing, which still faces average U.S. import taxes near 50% when past levies are factored into the 30% rate agreed to in Geneva, Switzerland.

Yet U.S. President Donald Trump's willingness to retreat so much from the earlier 145% duty on China surprised governments from Seoul to Brussels that have so far stuck with the U.S.'s request to negotiate rather than retaliate against its tariffs.

After China's tough negotiating tactics earned it a favorable — albeit temporary — deal, nations taking a more diplomatic and expedited approach are questioning whether that's the right path.

"This shifts the negotiating dynamic," said Stephen Olson, a former U.S. trade negotiator who's now a visiting senior fellow with ISEAS — Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore. "Many countries



U.S. President Donald Trump speaks to members of the media before boarding Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House on April 3 in Washington, D.C.

ANDREW HARNIK/Getty Images/TNS

will look at the outcome of the Geneva negotiations and conclude that Trump has begun to realize that he has overplayed his hand."

Left for now at 10%, the higher bespoke rates will kick in unless deals are

signed or postponements are granted before a 90-day suspension ends in July.

While officials are loathe to signal publicly any hardening of their approach, there are signs particularly from larger

nations that they're realizing they hold more cards than previously thought and can afford to slow the pace of negotiations.

South Korea's leading presidential candidate Lee Jae-myung said there's no need to rush

for an early agreement in trade negotiations with the U.S., criticizing the interim government for what he called a hasty engagement with the Trump administration.

Trump himself indicated last week — near the

halfway point of the 90-day reprieve — that there isn't time to do deals with about 150 countries lining up for them. So the U.S. may assign the higher tariff rates unilaterally in the next two to three weeks.

While Trump also said that India was prepared to lower all tariffs on U.S. goods, the nation's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar told reporters that trade talks are ongoing and "any judgment on it would be premature."

India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal was scheduled to arrive in the U.S. over the weekend for further negotiations.

"There are many countries that may learn from China that the correct way to negotiate with President Trump is to stand firm, remain calm and force him to capitulate," said Marko Papic, chief strategist of GeoMacro at BCA Research.

Japanese trade officials are scheduled to visit Washington this week. Japan's Trade Minister Yoji Muto skipped a regional meeting last week in nearby South Korea that U.S. Trade Representative Jameson Greer attended.

Top negotiator Ryosei Akazawa, who leads Japan's tariff task force, said earlier this month that he is hoping to reach an accord with the U.S. in June.

Netanyahu: Israel to take over Gaza, start aid flows

By ALISA ODENHEIMER, ETHAN BRONNER and GALIT ALTSTEIN

Bloomberg News (TNS)

Israel will take over the entire Gaza Strip, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday, as the military announced it would carry out an "unprecedented attack" on Hamas.

Netanyahu said that, alongside the increased attacks, Israel would start allowing aid into Gaza again after stopping it in early March in a bid to make Hamas release hostages and surrender.

International pressure has mounted on Israel to restart aid. The United Nations says malnutrition is worsening and last week France's President Emmanuel Macron accused Netanyahu of "shameful" behavior in blocking aid.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, head of the Religious Zionism party, who had in the past opposed restarting the aid, said on Monday there was no choice, "otherwise, the world will force us to stop the war." He also said that the military is now operating with much greater intensity.

"This time, the operational method is completely different: no raids, but rather occupation, cleansing and holding the territory until Hamas is destroyed," Smotrich said. "Along the way, we are destroying everything that is left of the Gaza Strip, because everything there is one big city of terror."

According to the Integrated Food Security Classification, whose assessments are used for planning by the UN and international aid organizations, around 1.6 million of Gaza's 2 million people are now facing an emergency regarding the availability of food.

Israel denies there are significant shortages of food.

But Netanyahu said he needed to allow in aid to stop the onset of hunger, adding that U.S. senators who support Israel had urged him to do so.

Netanyahu's decision to resume aid flows isn't universally popular in Israel, especially among far-right members of his coalition. They believe aid should stay blocked to prevent Hamas using supplies of food and med-



Displaced Palestinians gather to collect portions of cooked food at a charity distribution in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip Monday.

BASHAR TALEB/AFP/Getty Images/TNS

icine to fund and bolster its war effort.

Netanyahu said the Israel Defense Forces recommended he make the move.

Israel had originally said it would restart aid once it could establish secured distribution areas that would prevent Hamas from stealing the supplies.

However, this mechanism will only begin

around May 25, until when an interim arrangement would be put in place, Caroline Glick, international affairs adviser to the prime minister, said in a telephone interview.

"We have a stopgap measure for a week because while there is no starvation or critical shortage, it is getting close and we don't want to reach a red line," Glick said. "We are going to

make sure no one goes hungry in Gaza. There will be mobile kitchens."

The Israeli foreign ministry said at a Jerusalem press conference that the first items headed in are baby food, medical supplies and flour for the bakeries run by international organizations.

The IDF is asking Palestinians in Khan Younis, one of Gaza's biggest cit-

ies, and two other nearby areas to leave immediately, ahead of an attack.

On Sunday, the IDF said it was poised to order tanks and troops into unconquered parts of the Gaza Strip in an all-out bid to destroy Hamas, which still holds 58 hostages. The operation involves tens of thousands of soldiers.

The decision to step up operations has angered many Arab states and European countries. They fear it will increase the death toll in Gaza significantly and prolong the war, now almost 20 months old.

Hamas, designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. and European Union, triggered the conflict when it attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, from Gaza. It killed 1,200 people and took 250 hostages.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 53,000 people in Gaza, according to the Palestinian territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

Israel and Hamas continue to negotiate via mediators such as the U.S., Qatar and Egypt.

Portugal's PM wins vote, far-right party surges

By JOAO LIMA and HENRIQUE ALMEIDA

Bloomberg News (TNS)

Portugal's ruling center-right coalition won a snap election Sunday in a vote that saw the far-right surging, rocking the two-party system that's dominated the country's political life for 50 years.

Prime Minister Luis Montenegro's coalition got nearly 33% of the vote and increased its seats in parliament to at least 89, up from 80, early official results showed. While that's a stronger performance than last year's vote, it still leaves the ruling party well short of the 116 seats required for an absolute majority in the 230-seat parliament, meaning the premier will lead a minority govern-



Democratic Alliance party leader and Portuguese Prime Minister Luis Montenegro, center, celebrates his victory during the election night in Lisbon early Monday.

FILIPE AMORIM/AFP/Getty Images/TNS

ment.

Yet it was far-right Chega that stole the spotlight,

with results indicating it could overtake the Socialist Party to become the

second largest group in parliament. With the majority of the votes in, the

two groups were tied at 58 seats each — or 23% of the vote. Only four seats, reserved for voters living abroad, remain to be allocated. In the 2024 election, Chega won two of those seats, while the AD coalition and the Socialists took one each.

Portugal's government bonds were little changed on Monday, following peers in the region. The yield on benchmark 10-year debt rose less than one basis point to 3.1%. The country's PSI benchmark stock index slipped 0.5% as of 8:44 a.m. in Lisbon. Having the far-right group as the country's main opposition party would mark the first time in the five decades since the end of Portugal's dictatorship that anyone out-

side of the center-right or center-left has been this close to power.

"We are liberating ourselves from a 50-year bond in which there was no possibility of having an alternative," Chega leader Andre Ventura said as he arrived at his party's election night event. "This can only mean one thing: Chega today is an alternative for the government."

The far-right has been capitalizing on growing frustration with establishment parties.

The latest vote is the third early election in as many years and was called when Montenegro lost a confidence motion in March after struggling to put an end to speculation about potential conflicts of interest.

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Another View



JUSTIN SULLIVAN/Getty Images/TNS

California Gov. Gavin Newsom speaks during a news conference at Gemperle Orchard on April 16 in Ceres, California

Blue states find 'free' health care can get expensive

The following editorial was written by Las Vegas Review-Journal (TNS).

This will be unpleasant news to progressives, but handing out "free" stuff can get darned expensive. The budget dreamers in one-party California are the latest to be shocked — shocked! — that they can't escape this ironclad law of economics. Over the past decade, Democrats in Sacramento have expanded the state's Medicaid eligibility rules to cover almost 38 percent of the state's population, including those in the country illegally. The growth began in 2015 when California allowed the children of low-income illegal immigrants to qualify for the taxpayer-supported health care program. Then, last year, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill to cover adults 26-49 years old even if they lacked legal status.

Supporters argued that the move would save money in the long run by encouraging the poor to seek preventive care. But whether it accomplishes the latter, it's a virtual lock that it will never achieve the former — that's a certainty right up there with death and taxes.

Indeed, The Associated Press reports that California's Medicaid program is hemorrhaging red ink. Turns out that "free" health care for illegal migrants is costing \$2.7 billion more than anticipated, leaving a Medicaid budget hole of \$6.7 billion. The Newsom administration, the wire service revealed, recently

took out a \$3.44 billion loan from the state's general fund to cover the program's costs for this month.

California Democrats are now pondering the unthinkable. They may have to tighten pandemic-era eligibility rules that remain in place, raise taxes, cut coverage or even embrace the radical notion that forcing taxpayers to foot the bill for the medical care of millions of illegal immigrants may not be the wisest public policy.

The Golden State's experience isn't unique. In Illinois — where Democrats and public-sector unions also dominate politics — the AP reports that Gov. J.B. Pritzker has proposed a \$330 million cut to the state's Medicaid program to deal with higher than expected costs. Illinois also has expanded coverage to include many state residents who are in the country illegally. New York similarly allows illegal residents on the Medicaid rolls. In January, Gov. Kathy Hochul called the skyrocketing trajectory of the program's costs "unsustainable."

None of these deep-blue-state governors has yet admitted that their misguided policies have helped create the fiscal bog from which they now struggle to extricate themselves. At least two of them — Govs. Newsom and Pritzker — have their eyes on the White House. Obviously they aren't content with running their own states into the ground and seek to impose their fiscal illiteracy on the rest of the nation. Voters beware.

Weekly columnists sought

Do you have an opinion? We know you do! The Cortland Standard wants to hear from you as we seek to create an opinion page full of diverse view-

points. To be considered as a weekly columnist or to submit a letter to the editor, please email news@cortlandstandard.com with an example column.

Commentary

The family that puns together stays together

By ELANA RABINOWITZ
Chicago Tribune (TNS)

I have my mother's eyes, but my father's sense of humor. While I've inherited many genetic traits from the paternal side of my family, the one I treasure most is the ability to make puns. It has given me my voice and endless laughter, and for that, I am forever grateful.

Some people think puns are cringey, but to me, this form of wordplay is masterful. Puns are more than knock-knock jokes. They're clever uses of language, formed spontaneously and shared unabashedly with the right audience.

These types of clever retorts seem to favor the male side of my family. My grandfather, while learning English, had a repertoire of puns and cliches that he rotated regularly — every time he drank a sip of something, he'd pause, sigh and then say, "Good to the last drop," a once-popular advertisement for Maxwell Coffee.

My father, who is 92, still makes puns constantly, and even my brother has dabbled in them. But I am the biggest offender and with the right crowd can make them nonstop, like a rap battle among punsters.

My roommate recalls my father and me bringing my mattress to our apartment in the Cobble Hill section of Brooklyn. To lighten the load, I placed the mattress on top of my head and walked it into the room.

My dad looked at me and, without flinching, said, "Now, that's using your head." She still giggles from that one.

Sometimes my brother steals my puns, which should be the greatest form of flattery. We were driving home when I noticed the personalized license plate of a car near us. As a wordsmith, I always keep an eye out. The plate said something about being a mohel, a person who performs circumcisions.

The mohel sped up and zoomed in front of us. My brother was livid. To deflate the situation, I said, "Well, he's a mohel. It makes sense he would cut you off — maybe he was hungry and needed to get a slice."

Later, I found some version of this on my brother's social media page next to a picture of the infamous license plate.

Puns are more than wordplay; they actually gave me a voice. In middle school, I got my first French horn and named it Goldie Horn, so I guess I started early.

As I became more comfortable with myself, my quips started to increase.

In high school, among certain friends, my jokes emerged with greater force. I'm certain this type of quick wit won me over with the popular kids. Go figure.

In fact, my high school yearbook is filled with kind words, a few sarcastic one-liners and a plethora of "I will miss the puns." What is considered corny in some circles is masterful in others. Find the latter group, you won't be sorry.

While my use of wordplay is vast, there's one that stands out. I was working as a production assistant for a TV pilot, and the assistant director thought I had potential and was considering making me his second, i.e., his second assistant director. He liked my quick wit and Brooklyn accent, but I had little experience, so I was trying to impress him. I mentioned that I was a master punster, but how could I prove it?

A bunch of us were sitting around waiting for lighting when I met a man named Paul, who was the actual second, and then John entered the room. I got a huge grin on my face and offered to make an introduction: "This is John, Paul, the second."

Mic dropped. Laughter ensued. Victory. They even asked me back for another shoot.

Puns, like most things, are better in person. They're proof that you are present and listening and that you can use your mind and knowledge in an instant. It's a skill, like golf or music: Precision and timing are everything, as with life. The speed at which you need to form and disseminate puns rivals that of a race car driver.

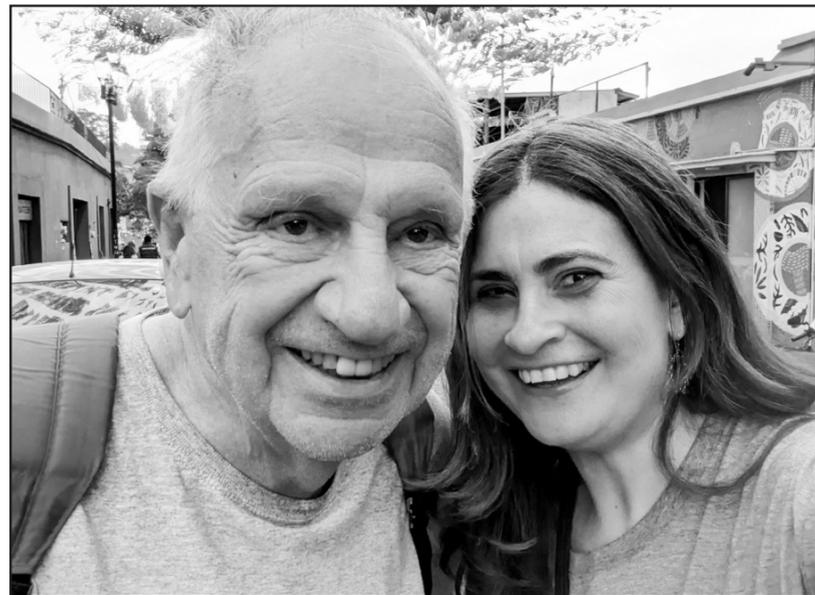
Puns are woven into my everyday life. Twice on Halloween, I dressed up as a pun: from the Freudian slip to the time I used Windex and tampons to create Picasso's blue period. I stopped using puns as costumes after that one.

I'm not alone in my love of this wordplay. There are actual pun-offs held annually in Austin, Texas, where people compete. It's impressive but not the same as the joy of crafting a perfect retort on the spot.

As for my dad, he and I still go at it. He's 92 and sharp as cheddar. And our wordplay is without a doubt my favorite thing we share.

So go ahead and give it a try. You might just find a new connection — something we could all use more of these days.

Elana Rabinowitz is a freelance writer, an English as a second language teacher and a master punster.



ELANA RABINOWITZ/TNS

Author Elana Rabinowitz hits the town for dinner with her father in Jalatlaco, Oaxaca, in February 2024.

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Letters to the editor policy

The Cortland Standard welcomes letters from readers for publication on this page. All letters submitted must be signed by the writer and include the writer's home address and daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for length and content. Letters are limited to 300 words in length. Letters endorsing or opposing the election of candidates for public office are limited to 200 words. Thank-you notes will not be accepted.

DRYDEN

From A1

Initiative grants), and three years ago they started giving grants for villages to revitalize their community. And the DRIs were \$10 million grants and the village one is typically \$4.5 million," Murphy said. "There'll be more meetings, and other meetings will be how you can propose to have grant money for your project. Whether it be to put windows into your main street building, or a roof, whatever you think you need. And it's not guaranteed that you get it, but we go through the process, then we send it to Albany and Albany says 'yup, that's a good project. OK, we'll give you money, or nope, sorry.'"

Murphy said the Wednesday meeting will be a presentation of how the program works and recommended anyone looking to receive grant money should attend.

"The process that we're going through is, the local community will be looking at what type of projects there are, and reviewing them and helping people create them so they can go after the grant money," Murphy said.

"It's a matching money. So, the owners contribute a small amount of money percentage wise and the big percentage of grant money is from the state," he said. "And since it's their money, they make the final decision, but what we're looking for is people to learn how they can go about applying whether they're trying to remodel the upstairs of main street, the building is closed because of safety. They'd like some money to help revitalize it so they can turn it back into apartments. That's one example."

Murphy said the matching ratio has not been determined, but likely by the second meeting it will be.

"They typically have like, six meetings with the public and the local committee, and during that process they find the percentage," he said.

For more information on the NY Forward program and upcoming opportunities for public involvement, visit drydenyny.com. Materials presented at the LPC meetings will also be available on the project website, for those who cannot attend in person.

For more information on the press release, contact Village Clerk/Treasurer Rotha Marsh at 607-844-8122 or via email at villageclerk@drydenvillage.ny.gov.

TC3

From A1

and earnings, and now New Yorkers 25 to 55 will be able to get that degree at no cost. This will greatly benefit not only the individuals that earn their degree and their families, but also New York State as a whole. We are very excited to remove the financial barrier to getting a degree for this group of students."

When Governor Hochul first proposed free community college for adults as part of her State of the State address in January, it was noted that there are more than four million working-age adults in the state who do not have a college degree or credential.

As the state looks to lead the way with emerging industries such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and green jobs, it is vital that higher education support those looking to enter these well-paying careers.

"The free community college program targets fields that are in high-demand, meaning participants will be getting skills that will make them highly employable immediately upon graduation," TC3 Vice President for Enrollment Management Robert Palmieri said. "Adult students often face a different set of challenges when pursuing a college degree, and not having to pay for tuition, fees or books addresses some of those challenges. Another key component of the SUNY Reconnect program is that it applies to both full-time and part-time students, which means students can take classes on the pace and schedule that best suits them."

This program, coupled with all the other support services we offer at TC3, will help our adult students succeed, which will help our community thrive."

At TC3, adults 25 to 55 years old with no previous college degree are eligible to earn a free degree in several programs, including chemical dependency counseling, computer information systems, computer science, computer specialist, construction and environmental technology, environmental studies, nursing, sustainable farming and food systems, teacher education transfer — adolescence, teacher education transfer — childhood, and teacher education transfer — early childhood. Students can enroll now to start in the fall semester.

Peter Voorhees is the Public Information Officer at Tompkins Cortland Community College.

Slain Jan. 6 rioter Babbitt's family to receive \$5M settlement

By DAVE GOLDINER

New York Daily News (TNS)

Slain Jan. 6 rioter Ashli Babbitt's surviving relatives are reportedly set to receive a \$5 million payment to settle their wrongful death suit against the federal government.

Justice Department officials and Babbitt's lawyers agreed to the huge payment to resolve a \$30 million suit that blamed Capitol Police for shooting Babbitt dead as she and fellow attackers tried to break into a room where congressional lawmakers were sheltering.

The planned \$5 million payout was first reported by the Washington Post on Monday.

The Trump administration and lawyers for Babbitt's estate told a federal judge earlier this month that they had reached a settlement in principle but the details were still being worked out. The final agreement has reportedly not yet been signed.

The windfall for Babbitt's estate marks a remarkable turnaround for the family of the 35-year-old Air Force veteran who was killed during the violent attack by thousands of Trump supporters seeking to block Congress from certifying former President Biden's 2020 election victory.

Capitol Police Lt. Michael Byrd, who fired the shot that killed Babbitt, was cleared of all liability by federal prosecutors and an internal Capitol Police investigation.

The probes said Byrd acted in self-defense and credited him with helping to protect lawmakers during the chaotic rampage by rioters including Babbitt, who was not armed.

Capitol Police Chief Tom Manger denounced the \$5 million deal, saying he was "extremely disappointed and disagree with (it)."

"This settlement sends a chilling message to law enforcement nationwide, especially to those with a protective mission like ours," Manger said.



Stephanie Keith/Getty Images/TNS

A protester holds a sign about Ashli Babbitt while participating in a political rally on July 25, 2021, in New York City.

Babbitt and thousands of Trump supporters joined the Jan. 6 attack after the one-and-future president told them to "fight like hell" to overturn his election loss in a fiery speech.

The mob overwhelmed outnumbered police and broke into the Capitol to hunt down perceived enemies of Trump, including ex-Vice President Mike Pence and then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Babbitt and several other rioters sought to break through the barricaded House chamber where lawmakers from

both parties covered in fear for their lives when Byrd shot her.

Still, Babbitt's lawyers claimed she was the real victim. She filed the suit last year with the aid of right-wing judicial groups.

"Ashli posed no threat to the safety of anyone," the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit claimed Byrd, who was not in uniform, failed to deescalate the situation and did not give her any warnings or commands before opening fire.

In the years after the attack, Trump lionized the Jan.

6 attackers and praised Babbitt as a martyr to his MAGA cause.

He pardoned, commuted the prison sentences or ordered the dismissal of all of the cases of the more than 1,500-plus people charged with crimes related to Jan. 6, including white nationalists convicted of plotting the attack.

"Ashli Babbitt was a really good person who ... was innocently standing there... when (Byrd) shot her," Trump said in March. "I think it's a disgrace."

Judge reverses Trump administration takeover of Institute of Peace

By MICHAEL MACAGNONE

CQ-Roll Call (TNS)

WASHINGTON — A federal judge in Washington issued an order Monday that wipes out the Trump administration's takeover of the U.S. Institute of Peace, ruling that the moves violated federal law and the Constitution.

Judge Beryl A. Howell of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in an opinion sided with a group of ousted board members of the entity created by Congress, who filed a lawsuit after the Trump administration's dramatic takeover in March that involved a former contractor breaking into the building.

Howell found that Trump's removals of the board members, and the subsequent actions winding down the institute, violated the protections Congress created to keep it as an independent think tank that "carries out its own international peace research, education and training, and information services."

"The President's efforts here to take over an organization outside of those bounds, contrary to statute established by Congress and by acts of force and threat using local and federal law enforcement officers, represented a gross usurpation of power and a way of conducting government affairs that unnecessarily traumatized the committed leadership and employees of USIP, who deserved better," Howell wrote.

Howell found that the USIP was "unique in its structure and function," as a nonprofit with ties to the federal government. Howell wrote that because the organization



Roberto Schmidt/AFP via Getty Images/TNS

A stop sign outside the US Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., on Sunday. Cost-cutters of US President Donald Trump seized control on March 17 of the institute, ousting the leader of the taxpayer-funded center for conflict resolution created by Congress in 1984.

does not wield any government authority, and only advocates for peace generally, Congress has the power to protect board members from removal.

"Congress's restrictions on the President's removal power of USIP Board members are squarely constitutional, and the President and his Administration's acts to the contrary are unlawful and ultra vires (beyond their legal authority)," Howell wrote.

In a separate order, Howell voided actions of the takeover, including: the removal of board members and George Moose, the acting president; the appointments of two acting presidents; and any transfer of assets to the General Services Administration.

Congress created the institute as an independent nonprofit in 1984, establishing rules protecting its board members and president from

removal, the initial suit said.

The Trump administration started the takeover after a Feb. 19 executive order titled "Commencing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy" that targeted USIP and other institutions for reductions. USIP regularly receives congressional funding and received \$55 million in fiscal 2023.

The federal law creating the USIP created a 12-member board including several administration officials as well as board members subject to Senate confirmation. In March the Trump administration sought to remove all non-administration board members and replace Moose.

After that the administration staged a dramatic takeover of the nonprofit, enlisting fired security contractors and Washington police to seize the building, Howell wrote. After that the administration reduced the organization to its "statutory minimum" operations, which included firing staff and canceling contracts.

The nonprofit's new leadership also transferred the organization's building, which it owned, to the federal government without any compensation.

Howell said that because those changes were "effected by illegitimately-installed leaders who lacked legal authority to take these actions, which must therefore be declared null and void."

Initially, Howell had denied a request for a temporary order to stop the winding down of the Institute's operations.

High School Baseball

McGraw baseball, softball off to hot starts

By PAUL CIFONELLI
 Managing Editor

BASEBALL

The McGraw baseball team is the No. 4 team in the state poll in Class D. The Eagles have started 12-0, with a plus-120 run differential.

McGraw's offense has dominated behind monster seasons from Calob Sutton, Brennan Wilson and company. Sutton is batting .512 with a double, 12 RBI and 11 stolen bases, while Brennan Wilson has tallied a .528 average with a double, a triple, 15 RBI and 10 steals.

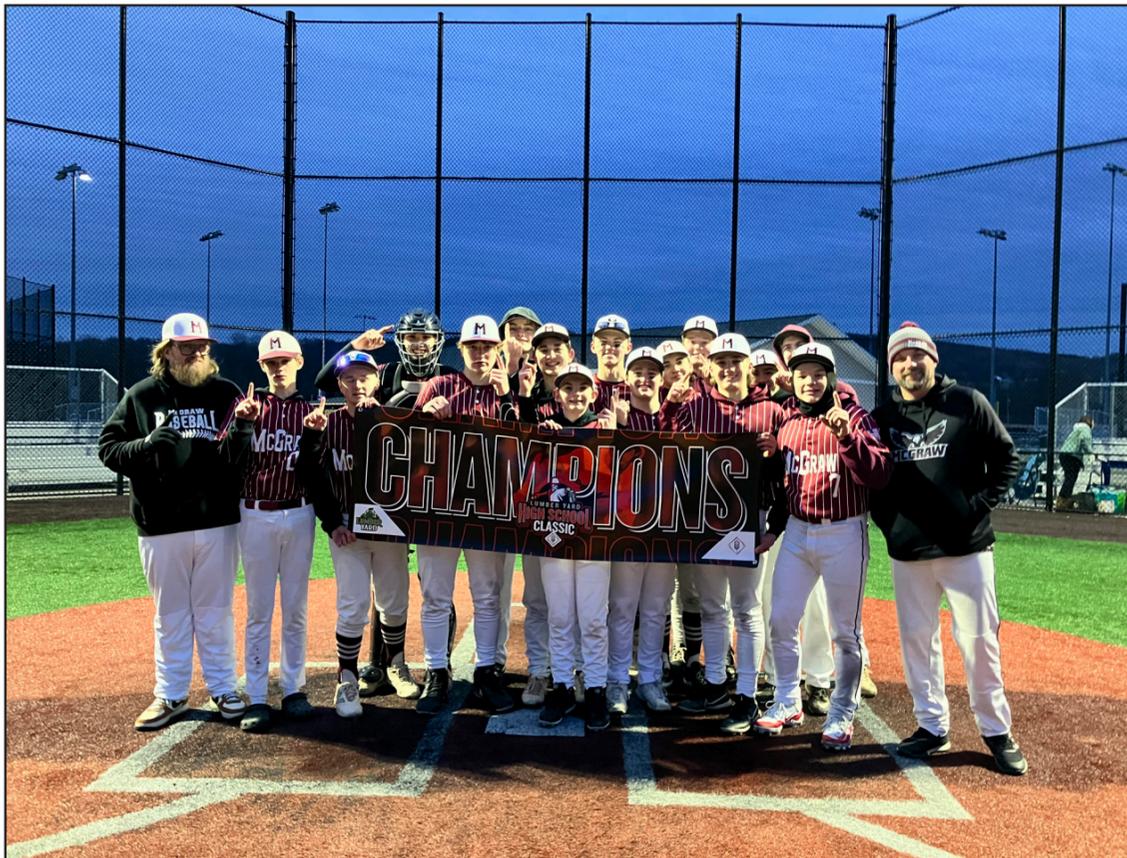
Blair and Owen Mulcahy have followed the duo up, with both sporting batting averages over .460 and recording double digit RBI.

The Mulcahy brothers have also been dominant on the hill, with Blair rocking a 1.86 ERA and 39 strikeouts in 24.2 innings pitched and Owen recording a 2.34 ERA and 31 strikeouts in 24.2 innings pitched.

Thomas Lea is also batting .378 with four doubles, two triples and 13 RBI, Liam Baker is hitting .324 with four RBI and Riley Van Liew is aiding with a .353 average, a double and eight RBI.

Sutton has also logged some valuable innings on the bump, throwing 16.1 innings to a 3.91 ERA with 25 strikeouts.

"It has been a great season so far," McGraw head coach Corey Wilson said.



The McGraw baseball team poses for a photo after winning the PBR Lumber Yard High School Classic earlier this season.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

"On the other hand the weather has been a bear to deal with. Our team is currently ranked No. 4 in the state standings, first in Section III Class D and first in our league.

We have scored an impressive 149 runs in 12 games and only allowed 29. Every player in our starting lineup has 10-plus hits. We have six players batting above

.400. We won the PBR Lumber Yard High School Classic with a big win over Tully. We had impressive wins over Hamilton and our biggest win of the season was Morrisville-Eaton. Some of our players have had some injuries that have affected their play, but they continue to work through it. Recently, our team had to battle through the flu, basically

affecting all players. This team is resilient and they love to compete. This team has worked very hard through the off-season to set them up for a great baseball season. In order to stay on top of things we have to play each game and not look ahead of ourselves. I told our team that every team wants to be us and we are going to see the best stuff

from here until sectionals."

McGraw will look to move to remain unbeaten at 5 p.m. today at Gutches Lumber Sports Complex against DeRuyter.

SOFTBALL

The McGraw softball team is also looking sharp so far, with an 11-3 record putting the Eagles

atop the CCL. McGraw has ridden a 9-1 stretch to the No. 19 ranking in the state's latest Class D poll.

McGraw relies on its two star pitchers, Remi Stull and Abby Lakin. Stull has a 2.35 ERA and 58 strikeouts in just 42.1 innings pitched, while Lakin has a 3.93 ERA and 50 strikeouts in 41.2 innings. The duo has held all but three opponents to five runs or fewer.

Leah Terwilliger and Katie Millard are leading the Eagles' offense. Terwilliger has a .475 batting average to go with two doubles, two triples, a home run, 12 RBI and 17 stolen bases, and Millard has contributed a .419 batting average, five doubles and 23 RBI.

Josslyn Eaton, Bristol Eastman, Emersynn Wilson and Haylee Bassett are all batting over .300 to supplement the top two hitters. Eaton has added five extra-base hits with a home run and Wilson and Bassett have both hit two doubles.

"Our season as been going pretty well so far," McGraw head coach Kristin Terwilliger said. "The major obstacle has been the weather. We will be battling for a league title. We are still a pretty young team. We have no seniors and just three juniors."

McGraw softball will look to win its 12th game of the season at 4:30 p.m. today at Stockbridge Valley.

SUNY Cortland Softball

SUNY softball drops regional final to Rowan

By FRAN ELIA
 Contributing Writer

GLASSBORO, N.J. — The SUNY Cortland softball season came to a close Sunday, as the Red Dragons lost to top-seeded and nationally fourth-ranked Rowan 2-0 in the championship round of the 2025 NCAA Division III Glassboro, N.J. Regional.

Cortland, the fourth seed in the four-team regional, needed to beat the host Profs twice on Sunday to win the regional. The Red Dragons finish the season 25-16, includ-

ing a 21-4 record over their final 25 games. Cortland was making its 24th NCAA tournament appearance and first since 2019, and the Red Dragons officially finish tied for 17th nationally.

Rowan improved to 46-2 and will host a super regional best-of-3 versus Salisbury Thursday and Friday. The Profs are looking to advance to the NCAA Division III World Series for the third straight year.

Rowan starting pitcher Emily McCutcheon tossed a five-hit shutout

to improve to 20-1 on the season. She struck out two and didn't walk anyone. Cortland starter McKenna Barry was strong as well, giving up two runs on seven hits with two strikeouts and a walk to the potent Profs lineup.

Rowan scored both of its runs in the bottom of the first inning. McKenzie Melvin was hit by a pitch with one out and stole second with two outs. Abigail Pawlowski doubled to drive home Melvin and Breanna Bryant followed with an RBI single.

Cortland's defense re-

corded double plays in the second, third and fifth innings, and Barry escaped a second and third, one-out jam in the fourth with a strikeout and groundout, to keep the Red Dragons within striking distance.

Cortland threatened in the top of the fourth when a Halle Wright single, a fielder's choice force out and a Maggie Cummings single put runners on first and third with one out. McCutcheon, however, posted a strikeout and groundout to keep Cortland off the board.

In the top of the fifth, Shannon Scotto reached on an error and pinch runner Emily Stavola moved to second with two outs after a groundout. Lainie Ornstein singled to third, but Stavola got caught in a rundown between third and home and was tagged out to end the inning.

Cortland battled again in the top of the 7th. Barry led off with a single up the middle and LaMont singled to left. The next three Red Dragon batters all hit hard liners, but each was caught -- one in right field, one at first base and

one in center field -- to end the game.

Barry and Wright were named to the regional all-tournament team. McCutcheon was named the regional tournament MVP and was joined on the all-tourney team by teammates Rylee Lutz, Payton MacNair and Liz McCaffery, along with Bela Jimenez and Heaven Oliva of Tufts and Ava Markert and Addison Shaffer of RPI.

Fran Elia is the Sports Information Director at SUNY Cortland.

3 SUNY Cortland softball players earn honors

By FRAN ELIA
 Contributing Writer

Three members of the SUNY Cortland softball team have been selected to the 2025 National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) Division III Region Three all-region team. Senior outfielder Halle Wright was named to the all-region second team, while sophomore second baseman Maggie Cummings and senior pitcher/designated player McKenna Barry were honored on the all-region third team.

Wright earned all-region honors for the second time;

she was a first-team selection as a second baseman in 2022. In 41 starts this spring, she batted .414 with two homers, three triples, nine doubles, 35 RBI, 51 runs scored, 25 walks and 10 stolen bases. She had a .512 on-base percentage and did not commit any errors in 76 fielding chances, primarily in center field. In four seasons, Wright registered 190 career hits, which is tied for ninth in school history, and had a .397 career batting average in 151 games. She ranks sixth at Cortland with 63 career walks and seventh with 141 runs scored.

Cummings started 37 games this season and batted .385 with a homer, triple, 10 doubles and 19 RBI. She scored 26 runs, walked six times and stole four bases, and she currently ranks sixth nationally in Division III with 17 hit by pitches. Cummings finished the season with a .496 on-base percentage and had a .976 fielding percentage with just three errors in 124 chances. She did not commit any errors over the final 25 games of the season.

Barry is an all-region selection for the second straight year; she was a second-team honor-

ee, also in a utility/pitcher slot, last spring. Barry batted .329 this spring with two homers, 23 RBI, 14 runs, 19 walks and a .450 on-base percentage in 36 games. In 23 pitching starts, she fashioned an 11-6 record with a 2.80 ERA. She allowed 97 hits and struck out 48 batters in 102 and a third innings. In 151 career games over four seasons, Barry batted .336 with 15 homers, 43 doubles, 79 walks and 129 RBI and was 36-13 in the circle with a 2.98 ERA and 130 strikeouts in 66 appearances. She ranks third all-time at Cortland in doubles and walks, fifth

in RBI and 11th in homers.

Cortland finished the season with a 25-16 record, including a 21-4 mark over its final 25 games. The Red Dragons reached the 20-win plateau for the 28th straight full season. Cortland won both the SUNYAC regular-season and tournament titles and finished second with a 2-2 record at a four-team NCAA regional hosted by Rowan University to tie for 17th place nationally.

Fran Elia is the Sports Information Director at SUNY Cortland.

SUNY Cortland Baseball

SUNY baseball finishes 2nd at NCAA regional

By FRAN ELIA
 Contributing Writer

UNION, N.J. — The SUNY Cortland baseball team finished in second place at the Union, N.J., NCAA Division III Regional after losing to host Kean University 4-3 in the championship round Sunday. Cortland, the second seed at the regional and ranked

19th nationally by D3baseball.com and 25th by the ABCA, needed to beat the top-seeded Cougars twice on Sunday to win the regional. Kean (38-8), the top seed and ranked ninth by D3baseball.com and eighth by the ABCA, advances to next weekend's super regional versus Salve Regina at a site to be announced. Cortland (31-13)

was making its 32nd straight NCAA playoffs, extending its Division III record for longest playoff streak. Of those 32 regionals, Cortland advanced to the regional final 25 times with 16 wins and nine runner-up finishes. The Red Dragons officially finish tied for 17th nationally with their second-place finish.

Cortland trailed 3-0 after six

innings but rallied to within a run twice. In the top of the seventh, Dylan Tierney led off with a single and, with one out, Nick Marola hit a two-run homer to make it 3-2. Down 4-2 in the ninth, Cortland cut the deficit to one on Adam Mieczkowski's one-out solo homer. Marola followed with a double to left center, and Talon Elkins hit a sink-

ing liner to center. Kean center fielder Kyle Adorno, however, was able to make the catch and doubled up Marola at second to end the game.

Kean went up 2-0 in the fourth on a John Chiusano two-run double, and the Cougars added a run in the fifth on a Chiusano sacrifice fly as he finished the game with three RBI.

National Basketball Association

Jokic knows Nuggets need deeper bench *And that's not all*

By TROY RENCK

The Denver Post (TNS)

OKLAHOMA CITY — The truth clobbered the Denver Nuggets over the head like a Michael Porter Jr. brick. The air came out with every airball from Russell Westbrook.

The reality is simple. The Nuggets were not good enough. There is no shame in losing to a 68-win team with home-court advantage. But the more troubling question hangs in the air: Can the Nuggets be good enough again, as constructed, to win another NBA championship?

Sifting through the debris of a 125-93 rout at Paycom Center, Nikola Jokic identified a gnawing concern when comparing the Nuggets to the remaining teams in the playoffs.

"We played for so long in such a way, it's hard for guys to step up against really good teams. We cannot ask for somebody who didn't play more than 20-30 games to jump in and expect them to be good," Jokic said. "It definitely seems like the more the rotation and a longer bench, those are the teams who are winning, Indiana, OKC, Minnesota."

Jokic is reluctant to play general manager — though the Nuggets have a vacancy — but his analysis of the situation is correct. The Thunder is rolling in the deep more than Adele. They play 10 guys at least 10 minutes.

The Nuggets' counter of Westbrook, who averaged 6.5 points over the final five games; Peyton Watson, a versatile defender with shooting limitations; and Julian Strawther, the Game 6 hero who committed a turnover on his first possession Sunday, was a bug on OKC's windshield. According to ESPN, the Nuggets' four starters, sans Porter, ranked as the top four in postseason minutes played.

The Nuggets are tougher. They are older. But they are not better than the Thunder. They require changes, plain and simple.

Game 7 was not a clas-

sic. It was a coronation. Oklahoma City, whose average age is one year older than the Auburn Tigers' Final Four team from this past March, has arrived. The kids are all right.

The Nuggets were not passengers on this ride. They were chaperones. Gordon, on one good leg that would have forced him to miss most or all of the next series, was Denver's third-best player.

That sums up how poorly things went. Jamal Murray was a long sigh, scoring 13 points with two turnovers and one rebound. Porter was a drag.

So, we are left to make sense of this season, of this ending. No one expected the Nuggets to upset the Thunder, so what played out Sunday was what we feared.

Still, the story of how the Nuggets showed resolve after president Josh Kroenke fired coach Michael Malone and general manager Calvin Booth is uplifting.

It means David Adelman deserves to remove the interim tag from above the office door.

"I will be talking about that stuff later," Kroenke said in the locker room. "But I am proud of the guys."

The Nuggets' run justified his stunning decision to can Malone and Booth with three games left in the regular season. It kept them out of the play-in and it won them a series against the Clippers they would have dropped.

Asked if he thought this core could win another title, Murray did not hesitate.

"Absolutely," he said.

Not buying it. There is no way to look at the Nuggets, even if healthy, and believe they could have won eight more games, especially against a Minnesota team that has owned them over the past calendar year.

There are two factors at work. The Nuggets need to fortify their bench — Adelman's trust in young players would accelerate their development — and land Jokic a true backup center. And they must tweak their starting five.



AL BELLO/Getty Images/TNS

Karl-Anthony Towns of the New York Knicks celebrates a 3-pointer against the Boston Celtics in the first quarter of Game Six of the Eastern Conference Second Round NBA Playoffs at Madison Square Garden on May 16 in New York City.

Knicks saved best for last *Now they look ready to chase a title*

By KRISTIAN WINFIELD

New York Daily News (TNS)

NEW YORK — The Indiana Pacers had to be watching closely — because the winner of Game 6 between the New York Knicks and Boston Celtics on Friday night at Madison Square Garden would reveal everything about the team standing between Indiana and its second-ever NBA Finals appearance.

On one side: the depleted reigning champions. No Jayson Tatum, whose ruptured Achilles ended his postseason in Game 4. A limited version of Kristaps Porzingis, still battling illness, unable to anchor Boston's front line for extended stretches.

On the other: the Knicks. A team that had just been smacked by 25 in Boston two nights earlier — by a Celtics team already missing its superstar. A team that had gone winless (0-10) against the top three seeds across both conferences. A team that held a 3-2 series lead with its first chance to close out a playoff series at home in 25 years.

So what did the Pacers see?

A statement. A rout. A changing of the guard the Celtics had no choice but to acknowledge.

"Losing to the Knicks

feels like death," Jaylen Brown said. "But I was always taught there's life after death. So we'll get ready for whatever's next."

This is life after death — for the Knicks.

Two straight years of second-round heartbreak. A regular season full of wins over bottom-feeders but not a single one against the NBA's top-tier teams. A no-show Game 5 that called their contender status into question.

The Knicks bent. A lot. But they never broke. And every time they were counted out, they came back sharper. Every collapse sparked a reset. Every loss made them hungrier.

On Friday, the Knicks weren't just trying to win. They arrived reborn — with the poise of a contender, the intensity of a team with unfinished business, and the clarity of a group that now knows exactly who they are.

They didn't just beat the Celtics. They buried them.

And in doing so, the Knicks re-emerged — not as a feel-good story, but as a legitimate threat to win it all.

Eight hours before Game 5 tipoff at TD Gar-

den, Jalen Brunson sat at the podium, reflective. The Knicks had gotten by Detroit in six. They had rallied from double-digit deficits in three games — two of them 20-point holes — to take a 3-1 lead over Boston.

But something still wasn't right. The potential hadn't been tapped. The pieces hadn't quite clicked. What was missing?

"Playing for a full 48 minutes," Brunson said. "You never know when your turning point is. So we'll see."

Game 5 wasn't it. The Knicks were flat. Lifeless. Undisciplined. They trailed by as many as 31 and left Boston embarrassed.

"The whole day of Game 5, it just wasn't us," Brunson later admitted. "And we knew that. We reflected on it. And we came back and said, 'We need to be ready. We need to be better.'"

Game 6 was a different story. For a day, these Knicks looked unrecognizable.

They imposed their will from the opening tip and never let go. They were the team with urgency, intensity, pride. Boston, even with its title pedigree, looked shellshocked, out of its league in a way few thought pos-

sible given the drastic swings in the series.

"It was time," Miles McBride said. "It was time for us to play with the lead and play tough with the lead, and be the more physical team and outlast them."

Few, that is, except those inside the Knicks locker room.

"If you want to go deep in the playoffs, you've got to believe you'll never lose," Karl-Anthony Towns added. "We showed that this series. I think that was really special."

And outside Madison Square Garden? Chaos. Thousands of fans flooded the streets after the Knicks' 119-81 win. Many hadn't seen this deep of a playoff run in their lifetime. Firetrucks fired off the horns. Fans chanting and cheering in unison. The kind of euphoria reserved for a city that's waited decades for something real.

"I think Josh [Hart] showed me a video of someone climbing a light post," Mikal Bridges said. "I'm new here, but I get it. New York loves the Knicks. And now I'm a part of that."

Yet inside the locker room? Calm. Focused. Celebratory — but not satisfied.

Professional Golf Association

Scheffler posts memorable PGA Championship win

By JORDAN KAYE

The Charlotte Observer (TNS)

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — It is unclear how — or if — future generations will remember this PGA Championship.

The tales of professional golfers bemoaning mud balls and preferred lies will die by next week. The same will be true of the arguments regarding Quail Hollow — is it interesting enough, penal enough for a major championship? Springing up more will be the lack of drama on Sunday — a runaway afternoon on the heels of that April Sunday in Augusta, when Rory McIlroy fell to his knees and golf climbed back into the public zeitgeist.

More likely, this third weekend in May will endure because it will be one of many. It will no longer exist as a singular event but the collection in a legacy.

Scottie Scheffler rolled to victory at the PGA Championship, firing a

Sunday round of 71 to finish the tournament 11-under — five better than a trio of golfers — Bryson DeChambeau, Davis Riley and Harris English — in second at 6-under. North Carolina's J.T. Poston finished tied for fifth with Jhonattan Vegas and Taylor Pendrith at 5-under.

Jon Rahm, who through 11 holes was tied with Scheffler for the tournament lead, crumbled on Quail Hollow's famed Green Mile. He finished two two double-bogeys and fell all the way to 4-under, seven back and tied for eighth with nine other golfers.

Scheffler, meanwhile, rolled into Charlotte in a group of 89 others with two majors. He exits the Queen City as one of 47 with three.

From there, you can start cherry picking stats punctuating the 28-year-old Scheffler's historical place. Such as: He joins Tiger Woods and Jack



ALEX SLITZ/Getty Images/TNS

Scottie Scheffler of the United States celebrates with his caddie, Ted Scott, on the 18th green after winning the 2025 PGA Championship at Quail Hollow Country Club on Sunday in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Nicklaus as the only three players with a pair of Masters victories and a PGA Championship win before the age of 30.

His greatness has not gone unnoticed; CBS golf commentator Jim Nantz said "this is superstar stuff we're seeing" as Scheffler

cruised to victory on the back nine.

Now, these things can be fickle. Following his victory at the 2014 PGA Championship, McIlroy joined another Woods-Nicklaus club: Four majors by age 25. Then McIlroy went dry,

failing to win another major until his April breakthrough.

In 2017, Jordan Spieth's Open Championship victory gave him three-fourths of the career Grand Slam before his 24th birthday — something only Nicklaus had

accomplished. Spieth hasn't won a major since.

All that is to say, we've done this before. A young star bursts on the scene, racks up some quick majors, joining some group only previously occupied by Woods and Nicklaus, and we begin projecting their eventual major count. Could he get to seven? Ten? Thirteen?

Then someone new comes along and a drought begins.

And, still, knowing that: Scheffler, who grew up mastering golf in Dallas, feels different. He does not so much bludgeon his opponents as he withers them down like wind and rain eroding a mountain-top. He requires them to be perfect because his "B+" golf game is often good enough to win.

Think about it: This PGA Championship began on Thursday with Scheffler shooting a round of 69. He hooked a mud ball into the water at 16 and made double bogey.

Major League Baseball



MITCHELL LEFF/Getty Images/TNS

Former Philadelphia Phillie Pete Rose acknowledges the crowd prior to the game against the Washington Nationals at Citizens Bank Park on Aug. 7, 2022, in Philadelphia.

Pete Rose deserves consideration for Hall

Now it's time to let the voters decide

By KEN SUGIURA

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (TNS)

ATLANTA — It's not hard to find people closely connected with baseball who believe that Pete Rose should never be allowed in the National Baseball Hall of Fame because he bet on his own team's games, was not remorseful about it and also was a contemptible human being.

Likewise, there are others who believe that Rose deserves posthumous induction for his many accomplishments as one of baseball's all-time greats, regardless of the many blots on his record.

That's why MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred's decision to lift the permanent ban on Rose this week, less than a year after Rose's death, was appropriate. It's not because Rose should be enshrined, but because he simply deserves the chance.

Rose's candidacy shouldn't be left to the commissioner. If reasonable people can disagree on whether he should be enshrined or not, that outcome should be determined by the Hall of Fame's selection process, not by MLB's ban or a rule seemingly established by the Hall with the intention to keep Rose out.

Consider this. What if the commissioner's office had the authority to permanently ban any player who had been found to have used a performance-enhancing drug? (Players are subject to permanent bans only if they have failed three PED tests.)

In that case, former stars and known users such as Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens and Alex Rodriguez would not have been eligible to be voted on for Hall of Fame induction. And the same debate that followed Rose would have followed them.

But they weren't banned. They were eligible, were voted on and didn't get in. After failing to make it during the 10-year period when they could be chosen by Hall voters, increasing numbers since have been denied by the committee assigned to consider players not selected by voters. Case (at least for now) closed. For those who don't believe they deserve to be enshrined, it's been a satisfying process of justice being served.

Let Rose have the same opportunity. If Rose were a career .240 hitter whose nickname was "Charlie Lethargy," there would

be no point. But he arguably is one of the top players of all time, and even those most staunchly opposed to Rose's Hall of Fame case ought to at least be able to understand why Rose advocates believe he deserves to be in.

At least in that way, he is like any other borderline Hall of Fame candidate. Probably everyone in baseball or who follows it could pick out players that he or she doesn't think should be in or players who aren't in but should be.

The difference is that those candidates actually were voted on. Why shouldn't Rose's case be allowed to be heard out?

Here's another reason: The purpose of MLB's permanently ineligible list isn't to keep people out of the Hall of Fame. It means they're banned from working with MLB, its teams or affiliated minor leagues.

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum is a privately owned museum that operates independently of MLB. The Hall made its decision to bar players on the banned list in 1991, which, not coincidentally, was the first year that Rose would have been eligible to be voted on.

Before that, they could be considered. In fact, Shoeless Joe Jackson, another player removed from the permanently ineligible list by Manfred, was voted on twice before 1991.

The museum has the right to do what it wants. But, at the risk of sounding like a goofy baseball romantic, the Hall of Fame spiritually belongs to the game and its fans, not a museum that has been in the hands of a family that has been its steward since its founding. Whether Rose deserves to be in or not shouldn't be decided by an entity that operates with no oversight beyond its own appointed board. But that's the play that the Hall of Fame made in 1991.

MLB was right to keep Rose permanently ineligible. MLB rules state that any player, umpire, club or league official or employee who bets on a game he or she is involved in shall be permanently banned. Rose never did anything to merit removal from the banned list.

But that shouldn't necessarily mean that Rose should be banned from the Hall of Fame. After all, the Hall itself didn't operate by that premise until 1991.

If Alvarado took PEDs, he made rational choice

The Phillies are cooked either way

By DAVID MURPHY

The Philadelphia Inquirer (TNS)

PHILADELPHIA — While the Phillies are probably cooked without José Alvarado, they also don't have much room to complain. They were kind of playing with house money, weren't they?

Rare is the PED suspension where the numbers lay it this bare:

- The spike in velocity.
- The rediscovered dominance.

- The two consecutive seasons of diminished stuff that preceded this season's electricity.

- The extent to which the Phillies have ended up relying on Alvarado's enhanced performance.

They call it a decline "phase" because it tends not to be a one-year thing. Nor does it tend to reverse itself in the dramatic fashion. True, we see plenty of relievers pitch at an elite level at 30 years old. But we rarely see it after their average fastball velocity drops from 99.6 at age 27 to 98.7 at age 28 to 97.8 at age 29.

I'm not saying that the Phillies should have been suspicious when Alvarado came out of the gates looking like a pitcher we hadn't seen since May 2023. I'm saying they couldn't have expected it. They knew Alvarado was in the midst of a two-year regression. They should have figured he wasn't going to be the guy he has been for them thus far. That kind of mutes the moral indignation one can feel now that the Phillies are cooked without him.

Let me try to rephrase that.

The big issue isn't that Alvarado was suspended for PEDs and thus will miss the next 80 games and be ineligible for the postseason, according to MLB rules. The big issue is that the Phillies ended up needing Alvarado to be a guy they'd miss that badly.

If PEDs played a role in that, then how would anything have played out differently without them?

After returning from

the injured list in 2023, Alvarado was still a damn good pitcher. The numbers in his last 28 games that year were plenty strong: a 2.33 ERA, 40 strikeouts, 18 walks, 27 innings. He just wasn't the guy who'd struck out nearly half the batters he faced without issuing a walk while allowing one earned run in 14 1/3 innings.

He was that guy this season. At least, he was a lot closer to that guy. In 14 appearances in April, he struck out 21 with two walks and three earned runs in 14 2/3 innings. That's a far cry from the 2023 postseason (6 Ks, 3 BBs, 1 ER, 8 innings). It's a farther cry from the 2024 regular season (4.09 ERA, 63 Ks, 28 BBs, 61 2/3 innings). And it's nothing like the guy we saw in Game 3 of the 2024 NLDS against the Mets, when he allowed three of five batters to reach base, two via walk, with two runs allowed and one strikeout.

The trend line is what's important.

For nearly two years, every step Alvarado took seemed to take him further from the pitcher who was their X factor during their 2022 World Series run. It is the journey that awaits every power pitcher who relies upon outlier levels of heat and bite to earn his room and board. There is a reason their stuff is not the norm. The human body is not built to produce it, let alone sustain it.

In a lot of ways, Alvarado is a prime challenge case for all of the moral hubris and ethical certitude that leaves some of us reaching for the barf bag whenever the discourse turns to PEDs. Getting old stinks. There is nothing more frustrating than when you try to do something that you've always done with ease only to discover that your body can no longer do it.

Many of us non-professional athletes spend some degree of time and money attempting to counteract this natural progression of things.

Preakness Stakes

Race favorite Journalism pulls off furious comeback

By JOHN CHERWA

Los Angeles Times (TNS)

BALTIMORE — There was little doubt going into the landmark 150th Preakness Stakes who was the best horse. And he more than proved it on Saturday as Journalism put forth a furious stretch drive to win in the second leg of the Triple Crown by a half-length.

The 3-year-old Santa Anita-based colt etched his name in history with a breathtaking rally after once again finding trouble when Goal Oriented leaned on him down the stretch. In the Santa Anita Derby, he was almost stopped when a horse backed up on him but he rallied, much like Saturday, to win.

"There was a lot of bouncing around there," said winning trainer Michael McCarthy, who won his second Preakness in two tries. "I guess when I saw that, I kind of resigned myself to the fact that it was another fantas-

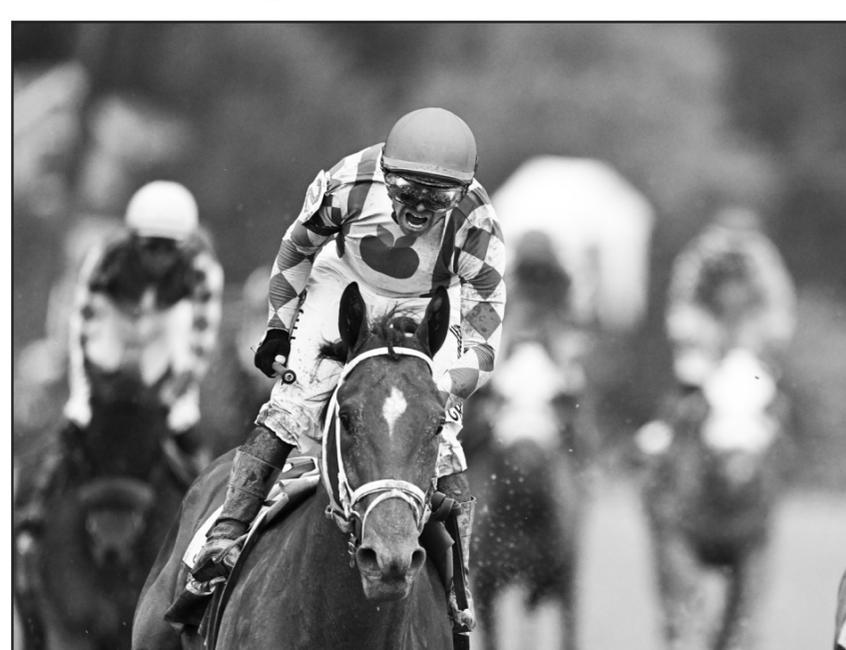
tic effort, maybe come up a little bit short.

"It just goes to show the testament that this horse has. I couldn't be prouder of him. In my mind, I thought we'd be two for two here, but you know what? I'm just happy to get one of these. They are very, very difficult to win one of these."

Journalism went off at even money and paid \$4 to win.

Clever Again broke on top and led down the backstretch with Gosger just behind him. Journalism was midpack, seemingly trapped on the rail. Entering the far turn, jockey Umberto Rispoli asked Journalism and he worked his way through the pack but couldn't get a clear path to the outside.

"I can't realize what this horse did today," Rispoli said. "I got in trouble at the quarter pole but he made himself keep going. I mean it's all about him. It's all about him. It's a pleasure [to ride him.]



Journalism, with Umberto Rispoli up, wins the 150th Preakness Stakes at Pimlico Race Course on Saturday in Baltimore.

LLOYD FOX/Baltimore Sun/TNS

"When I cross the [finish] line, it's all 20 years of my career that pass in front of me. I had to wait so long to ride a champion like that."

Gosger was second followed by Sandman, Goal Oriented, Heart of Honor, River Thames, Pay Billy, American Promise and Clever Again.

It marked the 21st consecutive Triple Crown race without a repeat winner. The last one to win more than one was Justify in 2018 when he won the

Triple Crown. Of course, the Triple Crown is only for 3-year-olds, so there is a new set of horses every year.

This year's Preakness lost a lot of star power — and possibly some interest — when trainer Bill Mott decided not to race Kentucky Derby winner Sovereignty. Instead, they believed the horse would be better served waiting for the Belmont Stakes.

It was the third time in the last seven years that the Derby winner did not come to the Preakness. It's not a good thing when the chance of a Triple Crown is over even before the gates open at Pimlico Race Course.

It continued the debate about whether the spacing between the Triple Crown races should be changed. Many trainers believe the two-week turnaround between the Kentucky Derby and Preakness is too short. This year, only three Derby starters ran in the Preakness.

Dear Abby

Daughter shows what she really thinks about house rules

DEAR ABBY: We asked our 19-year-old college daughter, "Lulu," to dog-sit and housesit several months ago. She knew our rule of no visitors allowed in our home while we were out of town. Because of this, we didn't feel we needed to prepare the house by filing mail and documents away prior to our short trip.



Lulu had her new boyfriend of a few weeks stay over for the weekend. She not only allowed this stranger into our home but also deceived us for months. It's difficult to let go of our disappointment in her poor judgment by allowing a stranger into our home with unsecured documents out in the open.

Her sexual activities and consequences are her "adult" choices, but I'm not sure when I'll be able to trust our daughter again. She had an opportunity to start building our trust shortly after we found out about "the weekend," but didn't take our consequences and rules seriously enough during her school break and lost access to some privileges. Yes, she did start counseling sessions this past semester. Where do we go from here? — NO TRUST IN NEW MEXICO

DEAR NO TRUST: Since we now know Lulu has poor judgment and lacks respect for your rules, take away your house key (if you haven't already), practice keeping your financial documents under lock and key when you're not in the house and hire a dog sitter. Then, cross your fingers and hope the counseling your daughter is receiving helps her become more mature and make better choices.

DEAR ABBY: I lost my daughter to cancer five years ago. She was only 36. She left behind a husband and three children, ages 3, 5 and 7. While my daughter and her husband worked, I was their "nanny granny" five days a week. I would also take them overnight on weekends. More often than not, I had more waking hours with my grands than their parents did. We were extremely close and bonded.

After my daughter passed, my son-in-law asked me to move in to help. I was in a position to do so, and it went OK the first year. Then some cracks began to show, and we ended up having a huge fight over money (though it wasn't REALLY about money). After I said some horrible things about him on Facebook, he took the grands away from me. It has been two years, and I have begged his forgiveness to no avail. What can I do? — MISSING THEM IN MARYLAND

DEAR MISSING THEM: You wrote that "cracks began to show." I wish you had mentioned what that huge fight was "really" about because I might have been able to answer your question about how to patch things up more fully. As it stands, all I can suggest is to continue apologizing to your former son-in-law, and continue sending gifts to your grandchildren on special days.

Cryptoquote

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-20 CRYPTOQUOTE
W H E E K H A G T K H E W V B D K A B T
J L M O X V K X B V J O K S E V I K L A I
M K M S R V T K H O L I O V E .

— K X E S O J L A D E V T
Saturday's Cryptoquote: THERE ARE ALWAYS FLOWERS FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO SEE THEM.
— HENRI MATISSE

Whatzit?

@WhatzitGame May 20, 2025
WHATZIT?
Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.

E DEN

SOLUTION: Garden party

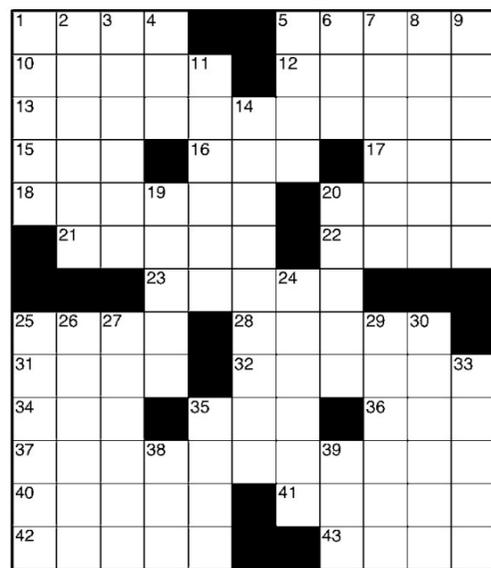
CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 40 Bay
 - 1 Collections
 - 5 Pan, for one
 - 10 Small singing groups
 - 12 Dote on
 - 13 Kidnap messages
 - 15 Inquire
 - 16 Back muscle, for short
 - 17 Penny prez
 - 18 River areas
 - 20 Catch off guard
 - 21 Arm's length
 - 22 Fence part
 - 23 Smell or sight
 - 25 Take it easy
 - 28 Little hooter
 - 31 Out of the wind
 - 32 Ratted out
 - 34 D.C. baseballer, for short
 - 35 Old auto
 - 36 Lyricist Gershwin
 - 37 Feature of some perfumes
- DOWN**
- 1 Valued violin
 - 2 Pencil end
 - 3 Wind chimes
 - 4 Sinking signal
 - 5 Gasp for air
 - 6 Wedding words
 - 7 Fries source
 - 8 Antarctic volcano
 - 9 Take offense at
 - 11 Comfort
 - 14 Effusive love letters
 - 19 Critical asset
 - 20 Compete in a bee
 - 24 Faints
 - 25 Unpleasant-tasting
 - 26 Galahad's mother
 - 27 End a suit
 - 29 Paper worker
 - 30 Bullring star
 - 33 Unpleasant
 - 35 Tire tracks
 - 38 Bright hue
 - 39 Make a choice

D	A	N	I	S	H	A	V	E	R	
A	D	A	G	I	O	T	E	L	E	
R	E	V	O	T	E	S	T	E	M	
E	L	A	T	E	R	E	E	V	E	
R	E	L	I	Y	R	E	A	R	E	D
S	Q	U	A	D	R	O	N	S		
T	A	U	N	E	O	N				
A	M	I	N	O	R	P	O	T	S	
L	U	X	O	R	C	A	P	E	T	
E	R	O	S	C	A	P	O	N	E	
N	A	T	E	A	V	E	R	S	E	
T	I	E	S	V	E	R	S	E	D	

Saturday's answer



Sudoku

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

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

Difficulty: ★★

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★

Astrological Forecast

By Magi Helena

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Focus on mastering your trade or doing some arts and crafts. Don't end a key relationship over a minor misunderstanding or make an impulsive decision that will end up breaking someone's heart. Take time to ponder and turn within.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You might be able to take advantage of sudden upheavals to prove your worth and secure your position.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You may risk an unpleasant surprise if you rely on having the best cards. Consider releasing control and letting go of what was.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): There could be things you can see and understand which escape everyone else. Explore ways to use your talent to bring that vision to the wider world. Develop the potential you see around you.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): You may have the opportunity to get in front of a problem and solve it while everyone else is still trying to define the issue.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): When chance knocks, sprint to the door like a gazelle. You could patch things up with someone before things head south.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Temporary circumstances may create tricky situations. Wait at least until tomorrow to make major decisions, expensive purchases, or crucial financial commitments.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): The thrill of an upcoming shift could ignite inspiration and fresh perspectives. As the day progresses, you might itch to break free from your routine, only to discover the other side isn't much greener after all. Learn to appreciate what is.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You

may feel stuck staring at the passing train, but your frustration can be put to good use.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Your life is often subject to the choices of people around you. It's up to you to take matters into your own hands to find the protection and wisdom you need.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You might be making smart choices to reach the financial or emotional goals you've set for yourself.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Your heart may be full of sympathy and understanding for the people around you who are suffering.

IF MAY 21 IS YOUR BIRTHDAY: You may enjoy improved conditions and embrace opportunities for lasting results this week. You might feel confident that anyone who grows closer now has your best interest at heart.

To Your Good Health

Persistent lower back pain calls for neurosurgical intervention

By Keith Roach, M.D.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm a 70-year-old active dentist and pharmacist with chronic lower back pain. My MRI shows a compressed/extruded disc in contact with a specific nerve. It is extruded by 5 mm. I know that this is very common, and not all patients with compressed nerves are symptomatic. I have specifically located lower back pain and numbness in the muscles of my thigh, which has worsened to weakness.

Two intraspinal injections and daily stretching have helped control the pain, but

muscle weakness persists. (I can stand from a squatting position but have difficulty standing from a seated position at times.) I am worried this might interfere with my activities. Am I living with the risk of permanent nerve injury? When should I consider surgery? —F.N.B., DDS

ANSWER: You are right that this is a common problem and that most people with a herniated disc will get better with conservative management. Conservative management consists of rest (with exercise only as tolerated), as well as anti-inflam-

matory and pain medication, followed by physical therapy.

However, when a person develops weakness, it is time to get substantially more concerned. Severe or progressive weakness is one of the clearest indications for neurosurgical intervention, and you should follow up closely with your doctor because of the weakness. It can sometimes be hard to tell weakness that is due to nerve injury apart from weakness that is due to pain, but an experienced examiner is usually able to do so.

Persistent pain in a person with a disc compressing a nerve

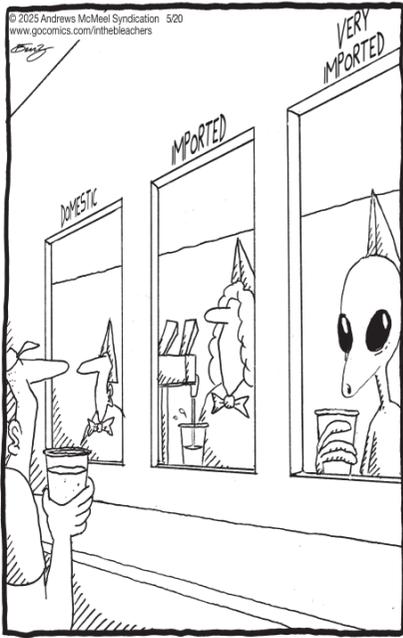
is an indication for a discussion about surgery with an expert, such as a neurosurgeon or an orthopedic surgeon who frequently perform these surgeries. Overall, people tend to get better with or without surgery, but results are faster with surgery. There are a few cases where surgery is clearly indicated, but I usually refer my patients when they have severe, persistent pain and severe or progressive weakness, or when a person simply can't do their daily activities. The decision to have surgery is always up to the patient in consultation with

their surgeon, if the surgeon agrees that they are an appropriate surgical candidate.

DEAR DR. ROACH: What treatment options are available for dandruff that is hereditary? —A.L.

ANSWER: Seborrheic dermatitis is a common skin inflammation of the scalp. It does have a hereditary component, but the exact cause of the disease is unknown. A skin fungus called Malassezia may be part of the cause. Generalists like me can treat mild disease, with the first-line treatment being antifungal shampoos.

IN THE BLEACHERS



DENNIS THE MENACE



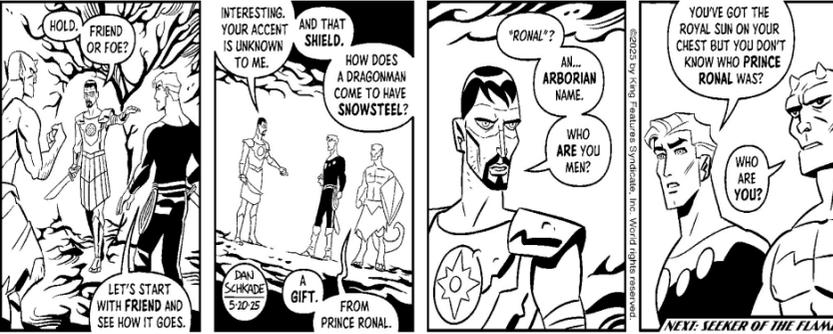
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



HI AND LOIS



FLASH GORDON



MARVIN



HI AND LOIS



MUTTS



GARFIELD



POPEYE



TIGER



MOTHER GOOSE AND GRIMM



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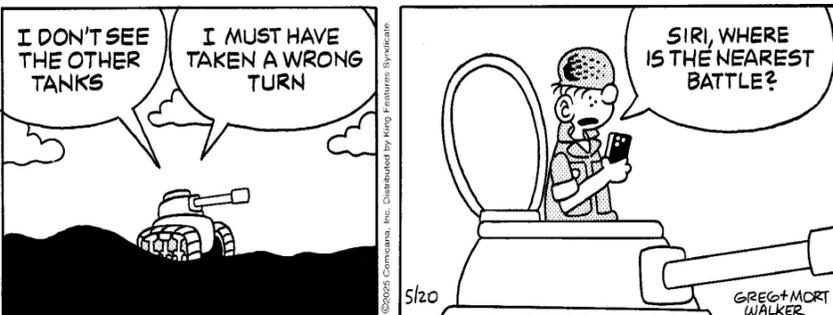
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Pope Leo XIV officially begins his papacy with an inaugural Mass in St. Peter's Square

By **ANGIE LEVENTIS LOURGOS**
Chicago Tribune (TNS)

VATICAN CITY — Chicago native Pope Leo XIV called for unity in an increasingly divided world Sunday during his inaugural Mass in St. Peter's Square, marking the official start of his historic papacy as the first American-born pontiff.

The 69-year-old Augustinian priest, a longtime missionary, also urged care for the environment and well-being of the poor, causes championed by his late predecessor Pope Francis.

"Brothers and sisters, I would like that our first great desire be for a united church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world," the new pope, a native of the south suburbs, declared during his homily. "In this time... we still see too much discord, too many wounds caused by hatred, violence, prejudice, the fear of difference, and an economic paradigm that exploits the Earth's resources and marginalizes the poorest."

Billowy white clouds flanked the iconic dome of St. Peter's Basilica as seagulls soared across the sunny blue sky. About 150,000 people filled the square to witness the pope's first Mass, according to the Holy See press office. Most of those worshippers stood shoulder to shoulder on the square, surrounded by the piazza's majestic 284-column curved colonnades, designed to represent the church embracing humanity.



BRIAN CASSELLA/Chicago Tribune

Pope Leo XIV greets cheering crowds as he arrives for his installation Mass in St. Peter's Square on Sunday at the Vatican.

Statues of 140 saints adorn the top of the landmark's 284 columns and 88 pilasters, gazing down at visitors below.

Men, women and children stretched out onto Via della Conciliazione, the roughly 1,600-foot-long cobblestone thoroughfare that links the piazza to the Tiber River. Large screens lined the avenue so even those far away could witness the new pope formally begin his term as the 267th pontiff.

Travelers from the Chicago area were in attendance, hoping to get a glimpse of their home-

grown pontiff. Among the local spectators were students from Loyola University Chicago's Arrupe College.

"For me, it's a moment in history," said Esdaine Lopez, 20, who lives on the Southwest Side of Chicago.

She was raised in an atheist household but has been exploring her faith since attending a Jesuit school.

"It's really a beautiful thing," she said.

The students were already in Rome on an annual trip to Catholic pilgrimage sites, a visit scheduled long before

the stunning news earlier this month that an American from their hometown was elected pontiff. They quickly altered their itinerary so they could be present for the installation.

Angel Guillen, 20, of Hickory Hills, said his parents were overjoyed — and a little jealous — that he's able to experience the installation of the pope from Chicago.

"It's a lot of emotions," Guillen said. "I'm just grateful to be here. I'm forever grateful."

Rebecca Pawloski, adjunct professor at the Loyola University John

Felice Rome Center, said she appreciated the pontiff's metaphor of a symphony conductor, "speaking of himself as a servant of faith and joy."

"Accompanied by your prayers, we could feel the working of the Holy Spirit, who was able to bring us into harmony, like musical instruments, so that our heartstrings could vibrate in a single melody," the pope said during his homily. "I come to you as a brother, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy, walking with you on the path of God's love, for he wants us all to be united in one

family." Pawloski hopes the new pope can help overcome the polarization that's gripped humanity.

"It is his motto and already in his first words he is going to be a pope that seeks to unite," she said.

Ancient rites, a Chicago flag

The event began with Pope Leo XIV waving to and blessing the multitudes from the famous popemobile, a vehicle specially constructed to transport the pontiff for public appearances, allowing him to be visible while still protected.

Some in the audience chanted "Peru," others shouted "USA," a nod to the pope's dual citizenship. The Holy Father appeared to spot and point at a Chicago flag near a group that included Oprah Winfrey, Gayle King, Maria Shriver and the Rev. Manuel Dorantes of Waukegan.

A litany of world dignitaries, royalty and faith leaders from across the globe were also in attendance, including Vice President J.D. Vance, who led an American delegation to the celebration. Vance, who converted to Catholicism in 2019, was joined by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is also Catholic, and second lady Usha Vance.

The liturgy commenced inside St. Peter's Basilica, where Pope Leo XIV — accompanied by the patriarchs of the Eastern Catholic churches — descended to the tomb of St. Peter, where they paused for prayer, incensing the site.

US' Vance and Pope Leo XIV discuss conflicts

ROME — U.S. Vice President JD Vance was received by Pope Leo XIV on Monday for a private audience, at the end of his visit to Rome.

The head of the Catholic Church met Vance and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio at the Vatican. This was followed by a meeting between the U.S. guests and Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the Vatican's secretary for relations with foreign states.

The Holy See reported that there was an

"exchange of views" on current wars around the world during the meetings.

The parties involved were called on to have "respect for humanitarian law and international law in areas of conflict" and to reach "a negotiated solution," a statement from the Vatican said.

Specific wars were not mentioned in the statement.

On Sunday, Leo explicitly mentioned Gaza, Myanmar and Ukraine during a mass in St Peter's

Square. The U.S. vice president attended the official inauguration of Leo XIV, who was born in from Chicago, on Sunday.

The top officials commented on "satisfaction at the good bilateral relations" between the Holy See and the United States, the Vatican said.

This was Vance's second private audience at the Vatican in a month. At Easter, he was received by Pope Francis, who died the following day, Easter Monday, at the age of 88.



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AFP/Getty Images/TNS

Vice President JD Vance talks to reporters on board Air Force Two at Leonardo da Vinci International Airport in Rome on Monday.

LEGAL NOTICES

Public Notice

TOWN OF HOMER NOTICE OF SPECIAL TOWN BOARD MEETING PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that a Special Meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Homer will be held on Wednesday, May 21, 2025, at 6:30 PM at the Town Hall, located at 31 North Main Street, Homer, NY 13077. The purpose of this Special Meeting is to discuss a proposed local law regarding the regulation of off-premises advertising signs. The Town Board may take such actions as it deems appropriate in connection with this matter. The location of the meeting is accessible to all persons. Any person in need of accommodations or translation from English should contact the Town Clerk in advance of the meeting. All interested persons are invited to attend. By Order of the Town Board Heather Hill, Town Clerk Town of Homer

Carter's Tree Service LLC NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of formation of Carter's Tree Service LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 03/21/2025. Office location: Cortland County, SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to the Company: 3681 Route 215, Cortland, NY 13045. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Pope Leo XIV, once just a Villanova student named Bob, is a Wildcats basketball fan

By **JEFF NEIBURG**

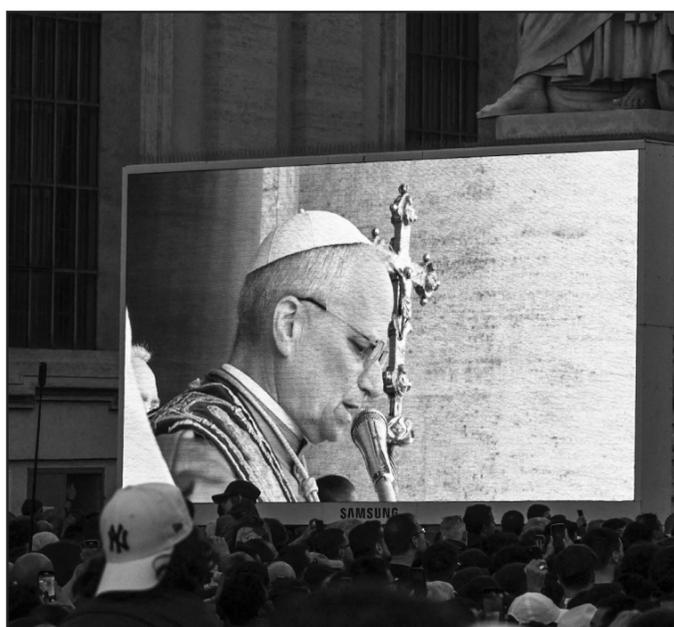
The Philadelphia Inquirer (TNS)

Whitey Rigsby had just landed in Chicago to attend a Villanova function and was still on the plane when his wife, Becky, called after the white smoke rose from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel.

The pope wasn't just an American, he was a Villanovan. And Becky, who works at a home for older nuns at Immaculata, held her phone in the air so her husband could hear the nuns, some of whom had attended Villanova, scream and cheer.

Rigsby, who played basketball for Villanova in the 1970s while Bob Prevost, now Pope Leo XIV, was a student, was wearing a Villanova shirt on the plane and had a few people come up to him in the airport. Later that night, surrounded by a bunch of Villanovans, the group toasted champagne in the pope's honor.

It is quite a remarkable thing to have attended the same school as the pope, but the realization came quickly to Rigsby and the rest of his Wildcats teammates. The pope probably sat in the stands at Jake Nevin Field House and watched Rigsby and the Wildcats play basketball



STEFANO RELLANDINI/AFP/Getty Images/TNS

People watch a large screen as newly elected Pope Robert Francis Prevost, Pope Leo XIV, addresses the crowd from the main central loggia balcony of St. Peter's Basilica for the first time, after the cardinals ended the conclave, in The Vatican, on May 8, 2025.

in the nascent stages of the Rolie Massimino era.

Rigsby, who graduated in 1978, one year after Prevost, didn't know Prevost when they were students.

"Even though we didn't know

him, I guess it sounds cocky, but he knew us," Rigsby said. "Everybody in those days went to all the games, so I'm sure he was at games watching us play. He's a sports fan."

In the days after Prevost was

elected to the papacy, evidence of his sports fandom has emerged. The Chicago native was on the television broadcast rooting for his White Sox during the 2005 World Series.

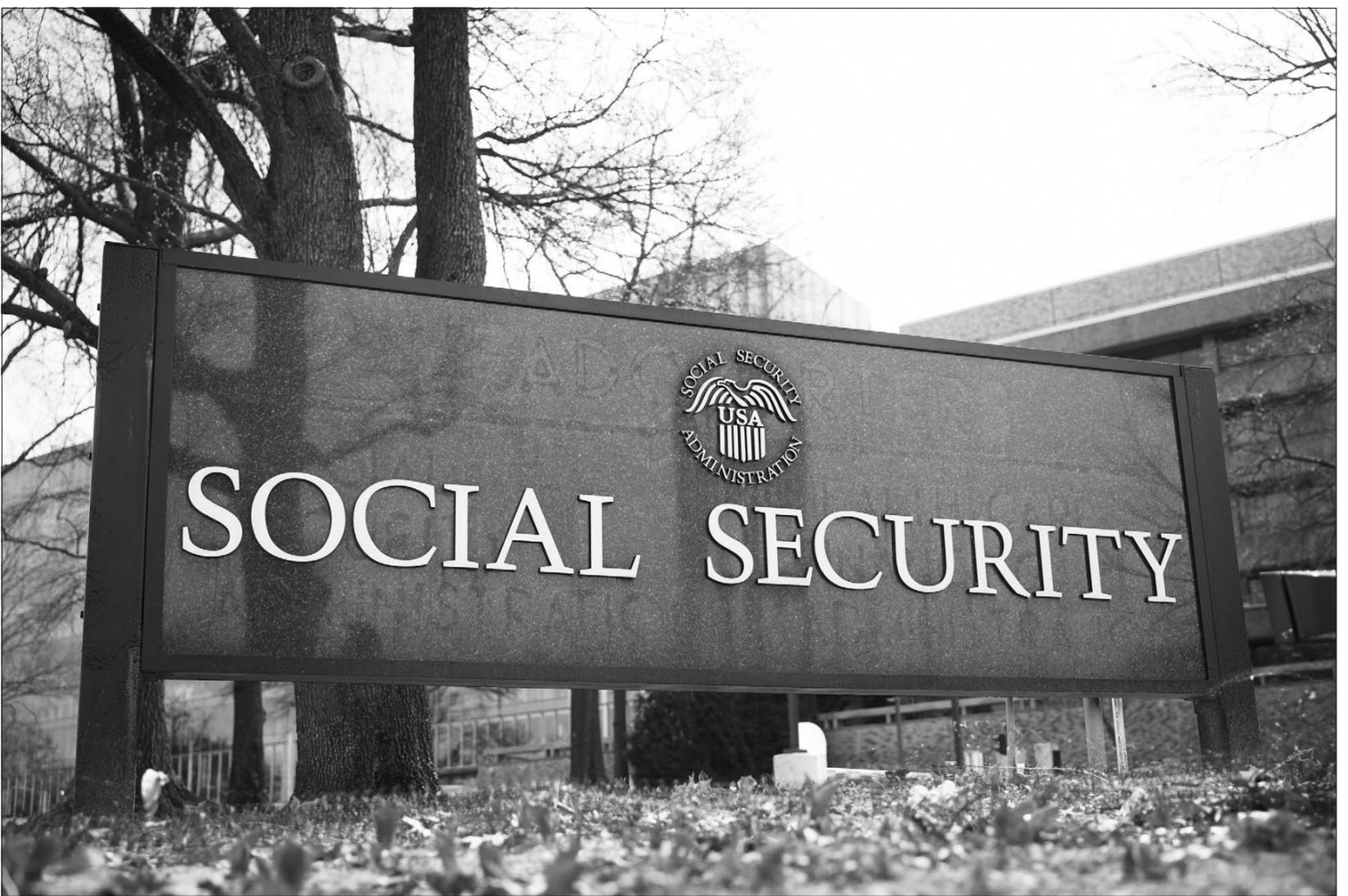
Memes, there have been plenty. Rigsby has a favorite, one with the pope's face on a No. 14 Villanova jersey. Rigsby wore No. 14 with the Wildcats, and he's used that meme to tell his friends and teammates that the pope was a fan of his.

"But no one is buying that," said Rigsby, who calls Wildcats basketball games on the radio and works for the school as a gift officer.

Especially not his former teammate, roommate, and longtime friend Joe Rogers, who was in the same class as Prevost at Villanova.

"I wish he prayed for Whitey to play a little bit better, that's the first thing," Rogers joked. "We might have won a few more games."

The Wildcats took their lumps during the first three years of Massimino's run, but they finally reached the NIT during Rogers' and Prevost's senior year. Rigsby helped lead Villanova to the Elite Eight the following season.



KAYLA BARTKOWSKI/GETTY IMAGES/TNS

A sign in front of the entrance of the Security Administration's main campus on March 19, 2025, in Woodlawn, Maryland.

At Social Security, these are *the days of the living dead*

By **DARIUS TAHIR**
KFF Health News (TNS)

Rennie Glasgow, who has served 15 years at the Social Security Administration, is seeing something new on the job: dead people.

They're not really dead, of course. In four instances over the past few weeks, he told KFF Health News, his Schenectady, New York, office has seen people come in for whom "there is no information on the record, just that they are dead." So employees have to "resurrect" them — affirm that they're living, so they can receive their benefits.

Revivals were "sporadic" before, and there's been an uptick in such cases across upstate New York, said Glasgow. He is also an official with the American Federation of Government Employees, the union that represented 42,000 Social Security employees just before the start of President Donald Trump's second term.

Martin O'Malley, who led the Social Security Administration toward the end of the Joe Biden administration, said in an interview that he had heard similar stories during a recent town hall in Racine, Wisconsin.

"In that room of 200 people, two people raised their hands and said they each had a friend who was wrongly marked as deceased when they're very much alive," he said.

It's more than just an inconvenience, because other institutions rely on Social Security numbers to do business, Glasgow said. Being declared dead "impacts their bank account. This impacts their insurance. This impacts their ability to work. This impacts their ability to get anything done in society."

"They are terminating people's financial lives," O'Malley said.

Though it's just one of the things advocates and lawyers worry about, these erroneous deaths come after a pair of initiatives from new leadership at the SSA to alter or update its databases of the living and the dead.

Holdings of millions of Social Security numbers have been marked as deceased. Separately, according to The Washington Post and The New York Times, thousands of numbers belonging to immigrants have been purged, cutting them off from banks and commerce, in an effort to encourage these people to "self-deport."

Glasgow said SSA employees received an agency email in April about the purge, instructing them how to resurrect beneficiaries wrongly marked dead. "Why don't you just do due diligence to make sure what you're doing in the first place is correct?" he said.

The incorrectly marked deaths are just a piece of the Trump administration's crash program purporting to root out fraud, modernize technology, and secure the program's future.

But KFF Health News' interviews with more than a dozen beneficiaries, advocates, lawyers, current and former employees, and lawmakers suggest the overhaul is making the agency worse at its primary job: sending checks to seniors, orphans, widows, and those with disabilities.

Philadelphian Lisa Seda, who has cancer, has been struggling for weeks to sort out her 24-year-old niece's difficulties with Social Security's disability insurance program. There are two problems: first, trying to change her niece's address; second, trying to figure out why the program is deducting roughly \$400 a month for Medicare premiums, when her disability lawyer — whose firm has a policy against speaking on the record — believes they could be zero.

Since March, sometimes Social Security has direct-deposited payments to her niece's bank account and other times mailed checks to her old address. Attempting to sort that out has been a morass of long phone calls on hold and in-person trips seeking an appointment.

Before 2025, getting the agency to process changes was usually straightforward, her lawyer said. Not anymore.

The need is dire. If the agency halts the niece's disability payments, "then she will be homeless," Seda recalled telling an agency employee. "I don't know if I'm going to survive this cancer or not, but there is nobody else to help her."

Some of the problems are technological. According to whistleblower information provided to Democrats on the House Oversight Committee, the agency's efforts to process certain data have been failing more frequently. When that happens, "it can delay or even stop payments to Social Security recipients," the committee recently told the agency's inspector general.

While tech experts and former Social Security officials warn about the potential for a complete system crash, day-to-day decay can be an insidious and serious problem, said Kathleen Romig, formerly of the Social Security Administration and its advisory board and currently the director of Social Security and disability policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Beneficiaries could struggle to get appointments or the money they're owed, she said.

For its more than 70 million beneficiaries nationwide, Social Security is crucial. More than a third of recipients said they wouldn't be able to afford necessities if the checks stopped coming, according to National Academy of Social Insurance survey results published in January.

Advocates and lawyers say lately Social Security is failing to deliver, to a degree that's nearly unprecedented in their experience.

Carolyn Villers, executive director of the Massachusetts Senior Action Council, said two of her members' March payments were several days late. "For one member that meant not being able to pay rent on time," she said. "The delayed payment is not something I've heard in the last 20 years."

When KFF Health News presented the agency with questions, Social Security officials passed them off to the White House. White House spokesperson Elizabeth Huston referred to Trump's "resounding mandate" to make government more efficient.

"He has promised to protect social security, and every recipient will continue to receive their benefits," Huston said in an email. She did not provide specific, on-the-record responses to questions.

Complaints about missed payments are mushrooming. The Arizona attorney general's office had received approximately 40 complaints related to delayed or disrupted payments by early April, spokesperson Richie Taylor told KFF Health News.

A Connecticut agency assisting people on Medicare said complaints related to Social Security — which often helps administer payments and enroll patients in the government insurance program primarily for those over age 65 — had nearly doubled in

March compared with last year.

Lawyers representing beneficiaries say that, while the historically underfunded agency has always had its share of errors and inefficiencies, it's getting worse as experienced employees have been let go.

"We're seeing more mistakes being made," said James Ratchford, a lawyer in West Virginia with 17 years' experience representing Social Security beneficiaries. "We're seeing more things get dropped."

What gets dropped, sometimes, are records of basic transactions. Kim Beavers of Independence, Missouri, tried to complete a periodic ritual in February: filling out a disability update form saying she remains unable to work. But her scheduled payments in March and April didn't show.

She got an in-person appointment to untangle the problem — only to be told there was no record of her submission, despite her showing printouts of the relevant documents to the agency representative. Beavers has a new appointment scheduled for May, she said.

Social Security employees frequently cite missing records to explain their inability to solve problems when they meet with lawyers and beneficiaries. A disability lawyer whose firm's policy does not allow them to be named had a particularly puzzling case: One client, a longtime Social Security disability recipient, had her benefits reassessed. After winning on appeal, the lawyer went back to the agency to have the payments restored — the recipient had been going without since February. But there was nothing there.

"To be told they've never been paid benefits before is just chaos, right? Unconditional chaos," the lawyer said.

Researchers and lawyers say they have a suspicion about what's behind the problems at Social Security: the Elon Musk-led effort to revamp the agency.

Some 7,000 SSA employees have reportedly been let go; O'Malley has estimated that 3,000 more would leave the agency. "As the workloads go up, the demoralization becomes deeper, and people burn out and leave," he predicted in an April hearing held by House Democrats. "It's going to mean that if you go to a field office, you're going to see a

heck of a lot more empty, closed windows."

The departures have hit the agency's regional payment centers hard. These centers help process and adjudicate some cases. It's the type of behind-the-scenes work in which "the problems surface first," Romig said. But if the staff doesn't have enough time, "those things languish."

Languishing can mean, in some cases, getting dropped by important programs like Medicare. Social Security often automatically deducts premiums, or otherwise administers payments, for the health program.

Lately, Melanie Lambert, a senior advocate at the Center for Medicare Advocacy, has seen an increasing number of cases in which the agency determines beneficiaries owe money to Medicare. The cash is sent to the payment centers, she said. And the checks "just sit there."

Beneficiaries lose Medicare, and "those terminations also tend to happen sooner than they should, based on Social Security's own rules," putting people into a bureaucratic maze, Lambert said.

Employees' technology is more often on the fritz. "There's issues every single day with our system. Every day, at a certain time, our system would go down automatically," said Glasgow, of Social Security's Schenectady office. Those problems began in mid-March, he said.

The new problems leave Glasgow suspecting the worst. "It's more work for less bodies, which will eventually hype up the inefficiency of our job and make us, make the agency, look as though it's underperforming, and then a closer step to the privatization of the agency," he said.

Jodie Fleischer of Cox Media Group contributed to this report.

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PAUL KITAGAKI JR./The Sacramento Bee/TNS

Students socialize during lunch at Sutter Middle School in Folsom, California. The school has banned cell phones during school hours, including lunch, since 2022.

School cellphone bans spread across states, enforcement could be tricky

By **ROBBIE SEQUEIRA**

Stateline.org (TNS)

Across the country, state lawmakers are finding rare bipartisan ground on an increasingly urgent issue for educators and parents: banning cellphone use in schools.

Fueling these bans is growing research on the harmful effects of smartphone and social media use on the mental health and academic achievement of grade to high school students.

In 2024, at least eight states — California, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, Ohio, South Carolina and Virginia — either expanded or adopted policies or laws to curtail cellphone use in schools.

This year, lawmakers in Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Texas and Wisconsin have proposed bans moving in their state legislatures.

Arkansas Republican Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders earlier this year signed a law requiring schools to ban students' access to cellphones and other personal electronic devices during the school day.

Iowa Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds also introduced a broader electronics device ban.

In January, New York Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul unveiled her plans to ban smartphones at schools.

And recently, Illinois Democratic Gov. JB Pritzker proposed a statewide ban on cellphones in classrooms.

Some experts warn, however, that these bans might be difficult to enforce — or may simply be outdated before they even take effect.

"The genie is out of the bottle, and squeezing it back in is going to be nearly impossible," said Ken Trump, a longtime school safety expert and president of National School Safety and Security Services, a consulting firm. "Phones and social media have fundamentally changed society, and by extension, schooling. Outright bans may be un-

realistic or difficult to enforce effectively."

Trump thinks governors, in particular, are responding to a trend rather than conducting thorough research. "Our elected officials are running to say, 'he [introduced a bill] so I'm going to do it too.' ... Once Florida passed their bill, it's been an explosion."

Florida in 2023 became the first state to enact an outright ban on cellphone use during instructional time, followed by Louisiana and South Carolina last year. Other states, including Alaska and Connecticut, issued recommendations rather than mandates, encouraging local districts to develop their own policies.

In Minnesota, districts are required to implement their own policies under the law passed last year. But a bill sponsored by Democratic state Sen. Alice Mann would ban cellphones and smartwatches in elementary and middle schools, and restrict the use of those devices in high school classrooms beginning in the 2026-2027 school year.

Mann began considering the measure after hearing directly from students last year.

"We had a committee hearing where kids told us how distracting cellphones were. That really caught our attention," she said. "We talked to school districts across the state — some had no policy, some had bans for one or two years, and some had bans for longer. The ones with bans all said the same thing: 'It's been wonderful.'"

ENFORCEMENT

Even where bans exist, enforcement varies widely. Some schools use Yondr pouches, lockable sleeves that prevent phone access during the school day.

Others require students to store their phones in lockers or classroom pouches, while some schools rely on simple classroom rules prohibiting phone use.

According to the Pew Research Center, 72% of



CLARENCE TABB, JR./The Detroit News

Luna Estrada, 10, prepares to unlock her pouch at the Yondr pouch station to retrieve her cell phone. It is part of the new cell phone procedure for students at Novi Meadows Upper Elementary School on September 6, 2024, in Novi, Michigan.

U.S. high school teachers say that cellphone distraction is a major issue in their classrooms. While many teachers and administrators report positive changes after bans, students have quickly adapted, finding ways to bypass rules by slipping calculators or dummy phones into pouches, or switching to smartwatches to check social media and send texts.

"Students are more tech-savvy than lawmakers," said Trump, the school safety expert. "They find workarounds — whether it's through smartwatches, Chromebooks or school Wi-Fi." States such as Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho and Pennsylvania allocated funding for programs that provide schools with lockable phone storage pouches, or financial rewards for districts that create their own restrictive policies.

A proposed bill in Texas would go so far as to charge students up to \$30

to retrieve a phone that was confiscated for violating a cellphone ban.

Schools have wrestled with how to regulate mobile devices for decades — with bans on devices such as pagers dating back to the late 1980s. In 2024, 76% of U.S. public schools prohibited cellphones for nonacademic use, notes the National Center for Education Statistics.

TOTAL BANS?

The Girls Athletic Leadership School Los Angeles has enforced strict no-phone policies since its founding in 2016. The charter school's no-phone policy means no usage on campus, during off-campus experiences, or even on school buses — a step beyond most phone bans.

"Cellphones present a major distraction and temptation for students," Vanessa Garza, Girls Athletic Leadership School Los Angeles executive director and executive prin-

icipal, wrote in a statement to Stateline.

"This long-standing policy has allowed our students to foster deep friendships, experience enhanced learning, and regulate healthy emotions."

Instead of top-down state mandates, Trump, the school security expert, thinks that schools should focus on reasonable restrictions and consensus-based policies that work for individual communities.

"If you try to ban phones entirely, enforcement becomes a nightmare," he said. "What happens when kids don't comply? Are schools going to dedicate staff just to cellphone discipline? If policies aren't enforced consistently, they become meaningless."

Trump said in school emergencies, students flooding 911 with calls can overwhelm emergency responders.

If a parent needs to get in touch with their child,

they can call the school, just like they always could before cellphones were in every pocket.

Mann, the Minnesota lawmaker, dismissed the idea that the pushback on phone bans is coming from students. Instead, she thinks parents are the ones most resistant to restrictions.

"Some parents are worried they won't be able to reach their kids, but they absolutely can. If a parent needs to get in touch with their child, they can call the school, just like they always could before cellphones were in every pocket," said Mann.

"What we're hearing from students is that their phones are pinging in class all day long — and a lot of it is from parents. Parents texting, 'What should we have for dinner?' or 'I'll be home late.' These are not emergencies."