



SPORTS

WEDDINGTON HIGH
SCHOOL DOWNS
REAGAN 24-2 IN
THIRD-ROUND
PLAYOFF GAME

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Cavs earn Triple Crown status after trying year

Cuthbertson boys
T&F crowned outdoor
state champions

BY MICHEL WAYNE O'NEILL
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WAXHAW, N.C. — It took almost a year for the Cuthbertson High School boys track and field team to make the history they had in mind: finish a triple crown season.

And that they did at North Carolina A&T's Truist Stadium on May 15.

All Head Coach Dustin Allen could do was go to senior and Campbell commit Amari Burrow and embrace him with tears streaming down his face.

"A whole gamut of emotions" was what Allen felt just hours after finding out the Cavaliers outbeat cross-county rival Weddington with 56.5 points for the title while the Warriors finished as runner-ups with 51. The boys team were also given paper crowns to signify the historic season they created together.

SEE CROWN/PAGE A2



The Cuthbertson High School boys track and field team became the second Union County high school team to earn triple crown status after Weddington did in 2018.

Photo provided



Photo provided

Roseanna Caldeira (second from left) answered the call to be a foster parent after being raised by foster parents in her home state of New York. That is helping Union County Human Services relocate foster children back to their biological families, slowly but surely.

Caldeira gives foster children 'a chance' and 'love' in nurturing care

Union County
in dire need
of foster families

BY MICHEL WAYNE O'NEILL
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UNION COUNTY, N.C. — Roseanna Caldeira was raised by foster parents and a grandmother who was also a foster parent in New York.

Decades later, Caldeira's childhood gave her the idea to become a foster parent herself here in Union County.

The decision was not too difficult for Caldeira as she joins one of a total of 46 licensed foster homes in Union County. In doing so, she became a third-generation foster mother, in which it was something she "always wanted to do," Caldeira said.

SEE FOSTER/PAGE A3

PRHS students recall choice to save woman from car fire

BY MICHEL WAYNE O'NEILL
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INDIAN TRAIL, N.C. — What almost turned into a tragedy turned into a moment of triumph Mandi Tarr and Joella Meadows will never forget.

The two have not forgotten about what they saw three weeks ago.

On April 30, when the two Porter Ridge High School sophomores cheerleaders were headed home from school, they noticed a car in front of them started having smoke come out of the engine. That prompted them to pay attention to the woman in the car.

"We first started to honk and signal her over in order to get her out of the car," Meadows said. "We had made her aware of the situation and told her she had to get out as soon as possible."

As soon as the two students made warned driver Sharon Maggard, they quickly called 911 because they had a feeling there would need to be fire assistance at the scene.

Maggard, who was unaware the car had smoke coming from the engine, was offered a seat in Meadows' car to take advantage of the air conditioning and a place to gain her composure. By the time first responders made it to the scene, the car was engulfed in flames.

Meadows the moment the two saw the smoke, jumping into action was the right thing to do.

"We thought that helping her was the right thing to do as if we were the ones in the car — we would have wanted to be



Photo provided

Porter Ridge High School sophomores Joella Meadows (left) and Mandi Tarr shown earlier in the school year, came to the rescue at the right time on April 30 to save a woman's life from a car fire.

saved as well," Meadows said. "We knew if she had stayed in the car any longer, she would have been in the car with the fire."

Tarr felt "a rush of thrill, but also gratefulness that we were able to help" in the end.

"I was also feeling so much shock as these things happen very rare-

ly," Tarr added. "I couldn't believe we were able to get to her when we did. I was also feeling a sense of purpose knowing me and Joella were meant to be there in order to help. I am so grateful that no one was injured. Even though (Maggard) lost most of her assets, she is still alive."

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NC's budget built
on flawed framework

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OBITUARIES

No obituaries
were submitted.

OUR TOWNS



Speller brings empowering care to Autumn Care of Marshville



Ken Speller has served as Autumn Care of Marshville's administrator since December 2025 and says the facility's top priority is human care.

BY MICHAEL WAYNE O'NEILL
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MARSHVILLE, N.C. — It didn't take long for Ken Speller to find his place as the new administrator for Autumn Care of Marshville as 2025 began to come to a close nearly six months ago.

"I didn't know anything about Marshville," Speller said. "I drove down here one day, toured the building, looked around the landscape and everything. I thought, 'We could be a winner here in Marshville.' My goal is to make this building the preferred provider for long term care here

in Marshville and in the surrounding areas."

Speller, who carries 14 years of health care administration experience with him, has now been the new administrator at Autumn Care's Marshville location since December 2025 after working in health-care facilities in Virginia Beach, Va., and Kanapolis here in North Carolina.

The community aspect of the venue has already been gratifying to Speller as he continues to learn about the people with whom he gets to work and for whom they care. He said his desire is to help team members

help the next person get the help they need.

"So many times, there's a disconnect in leadership in how we lead our people that's going to help us take care of our residents. You got to appreciate your staff members, too. You got to appreciate your team. You got to esteem your team in a fashion where they feel empowered to go out and make those tough calls. They feel empowered to go out and do what's necessary to take care of our residents," Speller said.

Though Autumn Care is the only long-term nursing facility in Marshville, Speller

commits every day for his team to provide exceptional, personalized care to all residents. He also has a commitment to ensure the services that Autumn Care of Marshville provides encompasses a level of excellence.

"People should not have to or choose to take their loved ones over to Wadesboro or to Monroe or somewhere like that," Spellers said. "We should be able to take care of their loved ones and with integrity, make sure that their needs are met, both physically and emotionally. That is my goal."

CROWN

FROM PAGE A1

The Cuthbertson girls finished as runner-ups with 57 points to Marvin Ridge, who won the 7A title on the girls' side with 61 points.

"It's been a tough year overall for the team in general," said Allen, who now has 17 team state titles since taking over the program as head coach in 2015.

"There's a lot of things behind the scenes that have gone on this year with this group that people don't know and that we had to deal with. Some of the kids' parents have been sick with different things and some other things that have happened. It sat with them. We had a car come through the stadium a day before The Clash of the Carolinas meet and things that we've had to battle back. We've had some of our best athletes get hurt. They had to battle back and all of that came through with how hard of a year it's actually been."

Regardless of the trials and tribulations, the Cuthbertson's boys team put the emotions aside and became the team that returned to the mountaintop for its first outdoor state championship since 2022. It is the Cavaliers' third outdoor state title in program history with the first being in 2021.

The Cavaliers also became the fourth boys

June 15 is when the cross country team will be able to hold-off season workouts to prepare for the fall season. Allen, who is a assistant coach on the cross country team, said this year's history can only repeat if the runners keep the standard that has been set.

team in North Carolina track and field history to have a triple crown season since Weddington in 2018 and Mount Tabor in 2001 and 2002.

The sweat and tears that led to this history were led by many runners who have years of experience in different sports that track has helped them be the best version of themselves.

Bryce Gatlin, also a senior who ran indoor and outdoor track for four years, played football before Allen recruited him to try track. That decision was not a hard one to make for Gatlin as he needed more strength.

"I used to play football and other sports, so this wasn't my first choice," Gatlin said.

"I wasn't really that hard working. I was slouching around, but started to get serious

my sophomore, and then really took it head on junior year, and then I took my senior year seriously."

When Gatlin looked around the stadium to see the cheers from families and teammates, "everybody's faces just seem like the parents got to be knowing the time that they put in and (we) put in."

"It was a great experience for everybody," Gatlin said.

It was also the experience of a lifetime for baseball veteran and senior Nathan Wilson, who took on track his senior season after also being recruited by Allen. In the first days of practice, he felt like he was struggling more than everyone else, but he took extra reps in his events and it paid off collectively for the men's side.

"That showed the people that were under me and are younger than me that working hard at practice really pays off," Wilson said. "Coach Allen taking a chance on me and telling me to come out and on track and buying 100% into me and putting me out there wherever. I didn't even know if I was going to be good or not but that really helped my confidence in going into college."

June 15 is when the cross country team will be able to hold-off season workouts to prepare for the fall season. Allen, who is a assistant coach on the cross country

team, said this year's history can only repeat if the runners keep the standard that has been set.

"They're going to know that they got work to do," Allen

said. "They're going to get back to work. We are going to go back to what we do: focus on each day, focus on our standards and our excellence and go from there."

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EDUCATION



Civic Compass helps interpret of government information

BY MICHAEL WAYNE O'NEILL
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WAXHAW, N.C. — A group of middle school students have been hard at work developing an app that is built towards making government information easy for people to understand.

The students, who are a part of Team Civic Compass, recently won the N.C. Middle School Track II — Technical/Built AI Technology category in the Presidential AI Challenge Competition.

The students — Kshetra Koti, Shanmukhi Malireddy, and Hasini Meruva — created an AI-focused project called “Civic Compass,” designed to help make



Photo provided

Waxhaw's Team Civic Compass, made up of (from left) Shanmukhi Malireddy, Kshetra Koti and Hasini Meruva, recently won the Presidential AI Challenge with the creation of the “Civic Compass” app.

complex government and civic information easier for people to understand and navigate. The platform emphasizes accessibility, simplified explanations, multilingual support, and improving access to government resources

through technology. The competition encouraged students to combine innovation, teamwork, research, and technical problem-solving skills to address real-world challenges. The team's supervising mentor, Venkat Mer-

uva, also Hasini's father, helped support the students with planning, deadlines, research guidance, and competition preparation, while the students themselves led the project development and presentation work.

Mr. Mervua did not have to give a lot of pointers once the team members came up with “Civic Compass”, but introduced the students to other AI concepts they could use for the app.

“When they came up with the actual concept, I didn't give much in inputs during the first level, I gave some pointers to them to do more research,” Mr. Meruva said.

The team jumped on the research and brainstormed ideas to

improve the app along the way along with mapping out features and key components.

“We had to take the inspiration from things around us,” Kshetra said. “And we basically built the app step by step and figuring things out one by one.”

Hasini said the team's mission was to improve civic information and make it easily accessible to civilians.

“We found that app idea, and then we decided to improve on it,” Hasini said. “Once we got the main gist of what our app would do, we went on into branching it out because this can't be one simple thing. It needs to have multiple features that everyone can use.”

Along the way, the team members also researched what it takes to understand the legal language of government documents. They based the app on the idea to make it easy to translate to other languages for users to better understand and comprehend government information and documents.

Mr. Meruva said the team plans to continue improving the app and allowing other trusted users to test the app. He also said the app is authentic if it is tested by trusted users.

Shanmuki said the team also plans to improve the tools the app already has and add more that “help reach more people” who would use it in a good way.

FOSTER

FROM PAGE A1

As of this week, the number of children in Union County in the U.S. Foster Care System is 137. Nationwide, there are more than 400,000 children in foster care at any given time.

“We had a neighbor that we knew of years prior, whose five children were coming into care,” Caldeira said. “Because we were somewhat acquaintances, we came on board and went to court not realizing that it was at the point of removal for the children, so we left court with five children. I had two, my parents had three, and that started the journey.”

Caldeira's grandmother started her foster parent journey with a welcoming heart as no one in her home were treated like strangers.

“They were loved and they were part of the family,” Caldeira said. “She fed them. She clothed them, and they had much less resources than than we do today.”

Once Caldeira started her own foster parenting journey, the family started with nothing and built it from there. She now has six children — five who have been adopted through foster care and one newborn who has been placed in her care since March.

Caldeira, a Waxhaw resident, loves seeing the women in her family being dedicated to helping children. She also likes seeing her impact carry through the legacy that her grandmother started with opening her home.

Today, Caldeira's children remind her to have resilience and understand that “every kid has a story.”

“It doesn't have to end

the way it looks like it needs to end based on their beginning,” Caldeira said. “If you give them a chance, you give them love. You can't erase their past, and you shouldn't erase where they've come from. But you have to help give them a starting point, a springboard so that they can have successful lives as they get older.”

TIME TO STEP UP

May is National Foster Care Awareness Month, which is a time to recognize foster and kinship families, honor the children in their care, and shine a light on the communities working to close a gap. Union County is one of those communities, and the gap is significant, Union County Human Services officials said.

Union County Human Services said the first step toward becoming a licensed foster family

is simply making a call. For more information, visit the Union County Department of Social Services website.

Union County's director of social services, Ashley Lantz, said the main goal with providing foster children a place of opportunity starts with providing safety before reuniting them with their biological families.

“If we can find them really good placement in a good foster home, then those social workers can work with the biological parents,” Lantz said. “That's one reason

we really need foster parents. The other reason is these kids deserve safety. They deserve love. They deserve knowing that somebody in the world loves and cares and wants them.”

While proper placement and safety measures remain top priorities for Union County Human Services, they are committed to following these steps with a nurturing understanding.

“The joys of being a foster parent are far greater than navigating the challenges children

faced in the past,” Lantz said. “It's the promise of something better every single day and I see that in our foster parents. I see that in our foster kids. I see that in every single program that we operate when we're able to meet whoever it is, where they are and give them a hand and help them through whatever it is that's happening. If we can find more foster parents that can assist us in helping foster kids find joy and love and support, then we will be making an impact.”

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The Enquirer-Journal Weather

Today

Showers Likely

79°

Tonight

Showers Likely

66°

Sunday

Showers Likely

83° 68°

Monday

Showers Likely

82° 69°

Tuesday

Showers Likely

84° 67°

Wednesday

Showers Likely

83° 66°

In-Depth Forecast

Today we will see cloudy skies with a 95% chance of showers, high temperature of 79°, humidity of 85%. South southeast wind 7 mph. The record high temperature for today is 92° set in 2004.

Almanac

Thursday's Temperatures

High 92

Low 67

Thursday's Precipitation

Precipitation 0.85"

Sun and Moon

Sunrise today 6:13 a.m.

Sunset tonight..... 8:25 p.m.

Moonrise today 1:21 p.m.

Moonset today 1:59 a.m.

Moon Phases

First 5/23

Full 5/31

Last 6/8

New 6/14

Local UV Index

0-2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

UV Index

0-2: Low, 3-5: Moderate, 6-7: High, 8-10: Very High, 11+: Extreme Exposure

Pollen Forecast

Today: Low Predominate: Trees

Pollen Rating Scale

100

75

50

25

0

Trees

Grasses

Weeds

0: Absent, 1-25: Low, 26-50: Moderate, 51-75: High, >75: Very High

North Carolina State Forecast

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

Today's National Map

This map shows high temperatures, type of precipitation expected and location of frontal systems at noon.

Cold Front

Stationary Front

Warm Front

Low Pressure

High Pressure

National Extremes

High: 107° in Tecopa, Calif.

Low: 13° in McKinnon, Wyo.

Around the Nation

City

Today

Sunday

Hi/Lo Wx Hi/Lo Wx

Atlanta

82/66 t

83/67 sh

Baltimore

61/51 sh

73/62 sh

Chicago

66/55 mc

72/58 t

Cleveland

69/60 sh

80/62 sh

Denver

72/48 pc

82/52 s

Detroit

65/53 sh

77/58 sh

Houston

83/72 sh

81/73 t

Indianapolis

76/61 sh

79/62 sh

Los Angeles

73/55 fg

72/56 fg

Miami

84/51 s

85/52 s

Minneapolis

71/52 mc

81/59 s

New York

57/51 sh

63/57 r

Orlando

92/75 t

90/76 t

Philadelphia

58/50 ra

69/57 sh

Reno

84/51 s

85/52 s

Sacramento

86/54 s

85/55 s

Salem, OR

78/50 mc

80/53 pc

Salt Lake City

82/57 s

86/58 sh

San Francisco

66/54 pc

65/53 pc

Seattle

72/53 mc

69/54 mc

Syracuse

60/46 ra

70/55 sh

Tampa

94/77 t

93/78 sh

Washington, DC

62/54 sh

74/61 sh

Around the World

City

Today

Sunday

Hi/Lo Wx Hi/Lo Wx

Acapulco

87/77 pc

86/77 s

Athens

73/62 ra

79/64 mc

Baghdad

96/72 s

100/83 s

Beijing

84/61 mc

90/68 pc

Berlin

81/57 pc

76/62 mc

Cairo

91/70 s

90/70 s

Hong Kong

88/79 ra

83/80 ra

London

82/62 ra

87/63 pc

Madrid

89/61 cl

88/69 mc

Mexico City

77/63 ra

77/66 ra

Moscow

75/62 ra

73/59 pc

Nassau

80/79 ra

80/79 ra

Paris

86/59 pc

88/66 s

Rio de Janeiro

77/66 ra

84/61 mc

Rome

83/63 pc

84/61 pc

San Juan

82/76 ra

82/75 ra

Stockholm

74/57 mc

69/54 pc

Tokyo

65/55 ra

71/62 cl

Toronto

52/46 ra

61/47 ra

Weather (Wx):

cl:cloudy; fl:flurries; pc:partly cloudy; mc:mostly cloudy; ra:rain; rs:rain & snow; ss:sunny; sh:showers; sn:snow; ss:snow showers; t:thunderstorms; w:windy

VIEWPOINT



How will you vote on N.C.'s new tax proposals?

The N.C. General Assembly has been busy debating some new ideas that we will asked to vote on. Among them are two proposals involving taxes. One would add to the State Constitution a limit on the state personal income tax rate. The rate would be capped at 3.5%. A second proposed constitutional amendment would place a limit on how much property taxes could rise after a property revaluation. If approved by voters, in both cases the new limits could not be changed by future legislatures. It would take approval of new Constitutional amendments to remove the limitations.

The purpose of today's column is not to take a position on the two proposals, and certainly not to recommend how you should vote. Instead, in keeping with the "You Decide" tradition, I have striven to assemble both pro and con information about the proposals and then let "you decide" your own conclusion.

The personal income tax in North Carolina is paid by households. It is distinct from the State corporate income tax paid by corporations. For much of the 20th century the personal income tax rate had inched up, meaning households paid more on each dollar they earned. But starting in the early 2000s, the General Assembly began to move in the opposite direction by gradually lowering rates. In 2026, the personal income tax rate is 3.99%, and leadership in the General Assembly want to continue lowering the rate. If passed, the proposed Constitutional amendment would require the rate could never go above 3.5%, but it could be lower.

Supporters of the amendment have various reasons for backing it. Some want to limit how much money is collected by the personal income tax because they want to limit the size of State government. Others want to shift tax collections away from the personal income tax to other forms of taxation, such as the corporate income tax and sales tax. They argue corporations have greater ability than households to pay taxes, and although the sales tax is paid by households, households have some degree of control over the amount because they control their spending.

A third reason is based on an idea called "supply side economics." Supporters argue lower tax rates can motivate more people and businesses to migrate to North Carolina, and also to cause households to work more because they keep more of what they earn. Both impacts

could limit the reduction in tax revenues that come with a lower tax rate, or even could cause tax revenues to increase.

Arguments against capping the tax rate revolve around flexibility and fairness in raising State public revenues. Some

worry that during economic downturns a cap on the personal income tax rate could restrict the State from obtaining enough revenue to continue its funding needs, with one example being keeping public schools functioning. Also, if the cap causes a shift to more revenue from the sales tax, this action could put a greater burden on lower-income households buying necessities.

The move to use a constitutional amendment to limit property tax increases comes from an obvious issue. Property values in the State have been rising much faster than income — in some cases, twice as fast. This means potential large increases in property tax payments by owners, often much greater than how much their income has risen. Sometimes owners may be forced to sell their property because they can't afford higher the tax payments.

Therefore, supporters use his situation as the reason for a constitutional amendment that would allow the General Assembly to set a limit on property tax increases. They also argue continued ownership of property, including homes, contributes to thriving neighborhoods.

Opponents have two concerns. First is the recognition that property taxes are a major source of public revenues for local governments, including counties and municipalities. A worry is that a limit might not allow for sufficient revenues to meet local needs, especially when localities are rapidly growing. For example, counties pay for many local employees and services. In particular, counties help fund public school construction and operation.

Opponents also point out that local governments can adjust property tax rates to make property tax increases more affordable. Also, with this adjustment being done at the local level, it can be fine-tuned to local situations, unlike what would happen with a constitutional amendment that applied the same restrictions to all localities.

In conclusion, North Carolinians will likely be faced with two important decisions about taxes this year. Hopefully, the information in this column will help you with this very big "you decide" situation.

Michael Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor Emeritus at North Carolina State University.



MICHAEL WALDEN

NC's budget built on flawed framework

Legislative observers who were eager to learn how N.C. Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger would function during the legislative short session — his last — may have gotten answers to their questions in the joint announcement that the House and Senate had reached a "framework agreement" on key points of a new budget. Once again, it appears that Berger pretty much got his way.

We say appears because there was nothing more than the announcement on key points. We're told the full budget won't be forthcoming until June and there's no telling what bad ideas will make their way into that document. But we got enough from the May 5th press conference to say that as things now stand it doesn't look promising.

Whoop de doo! Lawmakers finally agreed to give teachers and state employees pay raises. Last year, negotiations stalled when the House proposed a 2.5% increase for state employees and an 8.7% hike for teachers. The Senate had wanted a 1.25% increase for state employees with bonuses over the two years and 2.3% raises for teachers, again with bonuses each year. The "framework" calls for state employees to get a 3% raise and teachers an 8% boost.

When you factor in the cost of inflation over the three years since the last pay increases and the almost hidden revelation that raises would not be paid retrospectively (as is usually the case) but instead would be prospective, meaning increases would only begin in the coming July 1 budget year, the proposals aren't good enough. Teachers and State employees are rightfully grumbling about them. Lawmakers had to make employee

pay more attractive because of the increasingly large number of vacancies in vital state positions

Then there is the income tax issue. A major conflict erupted last year over personal income tax rates after the consensus revenue projections from the Office of State Budget and Management and the legislature's Fiscal Research staff projected a budget deficit if personal tax rates were cut further. Senator Berger

boldly stated he didn't think the projections were accurate. Turns out Phil Berger was correct. The latest estimates, released last week, indicate that because of increased personal income tax collections, capital gains taxes, and strong corporate income taxes the General Fund revenues will grow by 3.3% and should generate an increase of \$713 million for the year.

Lawmakers must have had some advance warning of these new projections when they agreed to allow further decrease personal income tax rates. Beginning July 1, the current 3.99% rate will be decreased to 3.49% and will further drop to 3.45% in 2030-32. That's great news for all of us who pay income taxes, but armed with these positive projections, legislators then ventured into dangerous ground.

They caved into a longtime Berger desire to put a constitutional amendment on the November ballot to cap NC personal income tax rates at 3.5%. Currently the cap is 7%, a more reasonable ceiling. This is nothing but a run-on bill, a measure lawmakers know that voters will eagerly turn out and vote for. But here's the problem. When we passed the current 7% constitutional amendment cap, we had several years' experience with tax rates lower than 7%. We don't have that experience now.



TOM CAMPBELL

While we hope it doesn't happen, past history shows that sooner or later our robust economy will stumble. How will state leaders generate the revenues needed to keep state functions running if their hands are constitutionally tied? Will they cut vital services? Will they be forced to increase other taxes? Or will they borrow money to pay the bills? It is lousy governance to put future leaders in a box.

But if this amendment is bad, the other three proposed amendments are worse. One would guarantee that North Carolina is a "right to work" state, something that isn't being challenged or needed. Another would guarantee a person's right to farm. And the worst of them all would put a cap on property tax increases our municipal governments can pass.

Property taxes have become a burden for many citizens and there's no question we need to have an open discussion about how best to meet local needs without sudden increases in property taxes. But once again we are tying the hands of city and county leaders and potentially forcing bad future decisions.

Constitutional amendments should be sparingly passed. Only 37 have been approved since 1971. None of these are necessary and are a shameless gimmick.

We haven't seen what else might be included in the rest of the typical more than 600-page two-year budget, but what we've learned so far isn't a great omen. Lawmakers have had two years to get this right. They need to do better.

Tom Campbell is a Hall of Fame North Carolina broadcaster and columnist who has covered North Carolina public policy issues since 1965. Contact him at tomcamp@ncspin.com.

Affordable energy helps foster economic growth

As we compete with other states to attract companies, entrepreneurs, and families, North Carolina has many advantages.

We have bountiful natural and human resources. Our tax and regulatory systems foster rather than impede investment and growth. In most cases, our infrastructure and public services compare favorably with those of our rivals.

One area of concern, however, is energy. According to a new American Legislative Exchange Council report, North Carolina had the 28th-lowest average retail price for electricity in the country last year. Our neighboring states of Virginia (14th), South Carolina (17th), Tennessee (18th), and Georgia (26th) all had better rankings.

The Tar Heel State fared better on another measure in the ALEC report: motor fuels. In 2025, the average price for a gallon of regular gasoline was \$2.83, the 12th-lowest. Gas prices in South Carolina and Tennessee were lower. Virginia's and Georgia's were higher. When I used an American Automobile Association tool to find more-updated figures, I found that as of mid-May, the average price in North Carolina was \$4.16 a gallon, vs. \$4.04 in Georgia, \$4.13 in South Carolina, \$4.16 in Tennessee and \$4.30 in Virginia.

Why are we better off on motor fuels than electricity? One explanation is

North Carolina's renewable-portfolio standard. Even after it (rightly) include nuclear power as a low-emission source of power, the regulation continues to obligate North Carolinians to pay more for electricity than do consumers in states with more reasonable targets (South Carolina, for example) or no targets at all (Georgia, Tennessee, and other competitors such as Kentucky and Texas).

That's not only the only variable that matters, however. Florida and Alabama lack renewable-portfolio standards but have higher prices than North Carolina. Utah and Virginia have standards and lower prices. Other regulations, growth rates, economic structure, and proximity to sources of lower-cost fuels affect prices, too.

One potential explanation that has gained political traction in recent months is that demand from newly built data centers is driving up electricity prices. North Carolina isn't the only

state where some localities are trying to slow or halt the construction of data centers. But Thomas Pyle and Daniel Simmons of the Institute for Energy Research say that, so far at least, this explanation doesn't square with the facts.

"There is no statistically significant correlation between the number of data centers in a state and its current electricity prices," they concluded in a recent study. In fact, prices in the top 10 states for data centers "are virtually identical to the average across other states. Furthermore, there is no statistically significant relationship between data center concentration and faster increases in electricity rates." Given the economic benefits of data centers, then, blocking their construction is unwise. One of my John Locke Foundation colleagues, Jon Sanders, points out that when the General Assembly overrode Gov. Josh Stein's veto last year to modify North Carolina's clean-energy goals, it set up households and businesses to save as much as \$13 billion on their electric bills. Future ALEC rankings may find our state improving dramatically while less-responsible states post higher prices.

Still, Sanders recommends formally converting North Carolina's carbon goals from mandatory to aspirational while also requiring that any retirement of baseload generation — that is, power not reliant on intermittent sources such as sunshine and wind — be replaced with an equal or greater amount of new baseload generation. In practical terms, that would have power companies replace coal-fired plants with nuclear or natural-gas plants.

Sanders also favors an "Only Pay for What You Get" Act that would allow utilities to recover the costs of new plants only to the extent the electricity they generate is dependable regardless of weather conditions and time of day. Such a policy would "incentivize least-cost and reliable generation," he wrote, reflecting the fact that "electricity is a basic human need."

It is that, to be sure, but its affordability is also a critical factor in economic development. We can't afford to get this wrong.

John Hood is a John Locke Foundation board member. His books *Mountain Folk*, *Forest Folk*, and *Water Folk* combine epic fantasy and American history.



JOHN HOOD
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

In our Saturday, May 16, 2026, story about Monroe City Council, we included information stating that the city of Monroe had moved to Stage 2 water conservation measures as of Friday, May 15, 2026. This was incorrect; it was Union County, not the city, that moved to Stage 2 that day. We published the county's press release about this in our Wednesday, May 20, 2026, edition. We have since removed any reference to the county's shift from the online version of the Monroe City Council story so as to not lead to any further confusion. The EJ apologizes for the error.

SPORTS



Giddings takes leap of faith on FHHS football program

New Yellow Jackets' head coach ready to work

BY MICHAEL WAYNE O'NEILL
EJ (MONROE, N.C.) REPORTER
MWONEILL@THEEJ.COM

MARSHVILLE, N.C. — The new man in charge of the Forest Hills High School (FHHS) football team is former JM Robinson offensive coordinator Gregg Giddings. And he's already coming up with steps

on how to keep the success going that his predecessor Jammie Deese had with the Yellow Jackets. Wednesday evening, the 2015 Hickory Ridge High School graduate and former outside linebacker met with the players and their parents to meet the families, outline expectations and excite the football community for the 2026 season. During a phone interview Thursday morning, Giddings



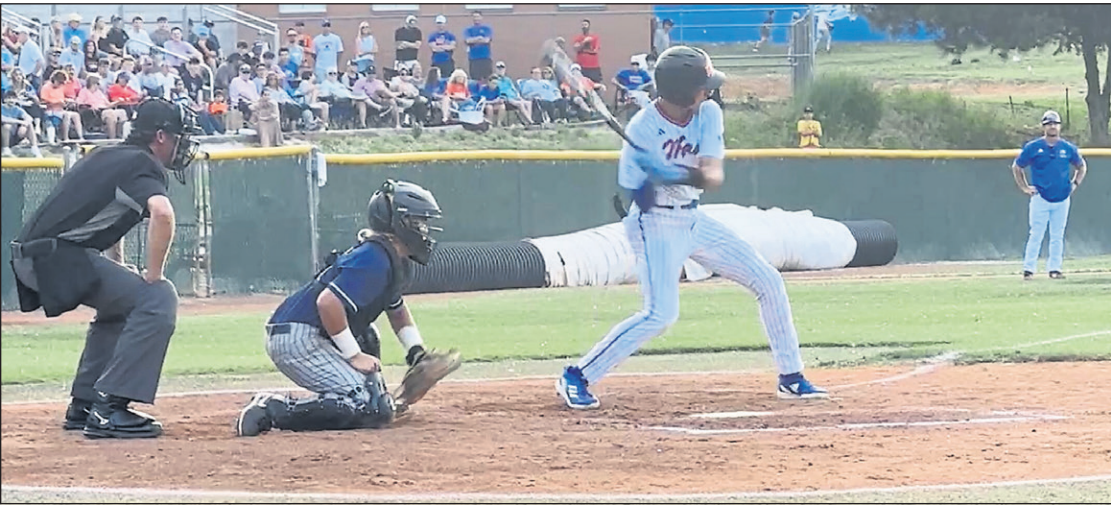
Gregg Giddings

said this is his first head football coaching opportunity at a high school, citing his past coaching experiences at his alma mater, Mount Pleasant, as well as South Rowan, Providence, and at JM Robinson. In 2025, Giddings guided the Bulldogs to a 11-2 record, a conference championship, and advanced to the third round of the 5A playoff bracket. "The big thing that I see (at Forest Hills) is young

men who are extremely talented," Giddings said. "They have a lot of passion for the game and they're actually very smart as far as football IQ. They have a very good coaching staff. The staff (members) that I have been able to inherit from Coach Deese are taking the bulls by the horn. They have been running the spring ball during this transition, and they have not missed a beat." Giddings said walking into the opportunity to be a head football coach feels

like "drinking water from a fire" in a way that he is ready to learn who his new players are about. He cites his family's support and his faith in Jesus Christ as the inspiration to take the leap and inherit a Yellow Jacket program that finished 9-3 overall last year. The first-year coach will go into the summer off-season program asking himself questions about how to build the offense and defense properly.

SEE COACH/PAGE A6



Michael Wayne O'Neill/EJ

Marvin Ridge High School baseball senior Alex Culicerto hits the ball in game two of a regional series against Hickory Ridge on Wednesday night.

Ragin' Bulls split regional series with Mavs in game two

Third game to be played Friday

BY MICHAEL WAYNE O'NEILL
EJ (MONROE, N.C.) REPORTER
MWONEILL@THEEJ.COM

WAXHAW, N.C. — It took seven runs for Marvin Ridge High School's baseball team to win the first game of its 7A west regional series against Hickory Ridge on Tuesday. The next day, it took two runs for the No. 2 seed Ragin' Bulls to even the series as they defeated the No. 5 Mavericks, 2-0, on the road, Wednesday night to force a third game. The third game was scheduled to be played at Hickory Ridge Friday evening to determine who will play in the 7A state championship series. "Our guys embrace challenges and it's a really good ball club on the other side," Hickory Ridge Head Coach Jordan Sells said moments after his team took the second game. "Anytime you've got another good team that you're playing against, you have to rise the occasion. When we

play sound defense, we have a chance to win. We didn't do that in game one, but we did a much better job in game two, making plays whenever we had an opportunity to do so." Hickory Ridge senior TJ Lucks was the first player to score for the Ragin' Bulls after Dylan Kelly, also a senior, stole a couple of bases in the second inning. From there, the visitors made things challenging for Marvin Ridge as most of their defense barred the home team from collecting any hits between the third and fifth innings. A wild pitch by Marvin Ridge allowed Hickory Ridge to score once more, thanks to freshman Luke Untereker finding the home plate for the second run. The Mavericks, which dropped to 21-10 and ended its win streak at four games, rotated between three pitchers. One of them, senior Matthew Terwilliger, struck out three batters while allowing one hit. Hickory Ridge also won in the hitting game with six hits

compared to the Mavericks' four. "Our pitchers did a great job, kept us in the game, and gave us a chance to win," Marvin Ridge Coach Trey Putman said. "I thought we had some good at bats. (Hickory Ridge) made plays defensively that they had to make, and credit it to them for that. There are some things that we can do better." Putman said after assessing the Maverick's performance Wednesday, they can prioritize the processing of at-bat appearances and not trying to do a lot against the Ragin Bulls' pitching staff. Next week, the winner of this series will play the winner of the Holly Springs-Cardinal Gibbons series at the state series. Should Marvin Ridge be victorious in game three, they would play in their first state series since 2019, the year they finished as state runners up. "We played clean defensively for the most part, but we will see if we can put it all together on Friday," Putman said.



Weddington High School junior Mad-die Diaz scores on an RBI by junior Callie Hill on Tuesday evening as the Warriors softball team clinched their second regional title with two wins against South Iredell.

Michael Wayne O'Neill/EJ

Lady Warriors win second regional title in program history

But 'job's not finished' after dominating South Iredell

BY MICHAEL WAYNE O'NEILL
EJ (MONROE, N.C.) REPORTER
MWONEILL@THEEJ.COM

STATESVILLE, N.C. — Cruising past No. 2 South Iredell proved to be easy for the top seed Weddington High School softball team as the Warriors won their second regional title Wednesday night at South Iredell. The Warriors, now 25-0, tallied a total of 18 runs and 21 hits in back-to-back games against the Vikings to make the cruise smooth in the end. Weddington is also one step away with the opportunity to win the

program's first state title in school history. "Everyone's excited," Weddington senior Ciara Blakney said. "We worked hard to get back to states and I think everything's paid off and we're going back there." In the first game, which Weddington won 8-1 at home, junior Callie Hill and senior Joella Thomas capitalized on RBI singles in the second inning. The Vikings, which finished the season at 22-8 overall, scored their only run in the first game in the fifth inning. Hill capitalized on another RBI in the seventh inning while junior Sammy Shipley capitalized on a South Iredell error. SEE TITLE/PAGE A6

Lady Warriors playoff journey starts with third-round win

BY MICHAEL WAYNE O'NEILL
EJ (MONROE, N.C.) REPORTER
MWONEILL@THEEJ.COM

WEDDINGTON, N.C. — Following an unusual sequence of events, the Weddington High School girls lacrosse team started their playoff journey in the third round of the 7A west bracket Tuesday night and defeated Reagan by a score of 24-2. The Warriors, now 13-4, had their previous potential playoff opponents forfeit games against Weddington, which allowed them to advance to the third round. Regardless, the team practiced for two and a half weeks with focus, though it was challenging for the girls, citing their desire to play again. "The past weeks have been challenging keeping the girls motivated, keeping them focused, locked in and knowing what our next direction was was really import-

ant," Weddington Head Coach Zac Winder said. "We can't take any team for granted and make sure that we're coming out playing Weddington Ball and doing the best that we can." Against Reagan, Winder was elated to see his players play Weddington lacrosse based on their ball movement on offense and how they showed up defensively. Sophomore Olivia Peterson and junior Grace Webb scored five goals each for the Warriors; Peterson also notched two assists. McKenna Bartos, also a senior, added five assists for Weddington. "It's what we've been working on the past two weeks," Winder said. "They executed, and it showed on the field. They continue to move, and it'll set us up for our next game (against Lake Norman)."

SEE PLAYOFF/PAGE A6



Weddington High School sophomore Olivia Peterson (left) escapes from Reagan senior Morgan Phillips as she lifted the Warriors to a 24-2 home win Tuesday night in a third-round playoff game.

Michael Wayne O'Neill/EJ

Spartans, Cougars, Cardinals end soccer seasons after playoff losses

BY MICHAEL WAYNE O'NEILL
EJ (MONROE, N.C.) REPORTER
MWONEILL@THEEJ.COM

UNION COUNTY, N.C. — Three Union County high school women's soccer teams finished their seasons in their respective playoff brackets last week — No. 8 Union Academy (3A), No. 7 Central Academy (4A), and No. 10 Sun Valley (6A).

The Cardinals fell to top seed Pine Lake Prep, 8-0, to end their conference championship season at 17-10 overall in the fourth round. Union Academy had scored 13 goals in their red-hot playoff journey leading up to the matchup that took place Wednesday night.

The loss was also Union Academy's fifth shutout loss of the season.

Among many of the seniors the Cardinals will have to adjust replacing next season is leading scorer Hadassa Garcia, who finished her senior season with 26 goals and 12 assists, and goalkeeper Isabella Lucas. Lucas was responsible for recording 144 saves for the Cardinals for her senior season.

On Monday, No. 2 Hibriten shut out No. 7 Central Academy, 2-0, in a third-round home playoff game, ending the Cougars' conference championship season at 18-6 overall. The Cougars rebounded well as they scored

125 goals as a team all season.

Central Academy will lose leading scorer Makenna Bahnick, who led the team in goals and assists on the way to ending her four-year career scoring 106 goals in 77 career games. The Cougars will also lose Laura Aslakson, who was fifth on the team in scoring this season.

No. 10 Sun Valley ended their 2026 campaign with a 14-7-1 overall record with a 2-1 road loss to No. 2 Mount Tabor on Monday evening.

The Spartans will be without Nicole Kleyner and Sophia Seddon who combined to score 35 goals this season. They also combined for 10 assists.

PLAYOFF

FROM PAGE A5

Also scoring multiple goals for Weddington were senior Abbey Testa (4), freshman Lianna Matela (2), Bartos (2), and sophomore Ellie Harper (2).

The next step for the Warriors to get back to the state title game, where they finished as runner-ups the year

before, is "continuing to be encouraging towards one another," Ragan Giddings said.

"It feels good to be back and play (Lake) Norman," Giddings said.

"That's gonna be a really good game and the focus is trust."

No. 2 Weddington will host No 3 Lake Norman Friday evening for the opportunity to play top seed Marvin Ridge or No. 4 Chapel Hill in the

7A west regional series.

"We are using last year's loss in the championship as revenge and we want to even more this year," Testa said.

"That's going to motivate us and push us. We haven't played in almost a month, so it was good to be back out there. We practiced every day and I think it was great that we were able to put all our work in a game (against Reagan)."

COACH

FROM PAGE A5

Number one, "who's going to stand out?" and number two, "Who's gonna be the guy that can make those plays when you need it the most?"

Another focus for Giddings is to develop the whole person in each Forest Hills football player as student-athletes just like Deese did during his five-year tenure.

"You need this educa-

tion to help carry you over into life," Giddings said. "That is a major focus in the program. It is going to continue to be the focus. Our coaching staff will be brought in and we will make sure that everything is being handled in the classroom."

Above all, Giddings wants to help develop the mental aspect of the game in his players, so they can continue to be successful in life.

Giddings said he has full support from school administration and the

community with what he will do to help the football program grow as one family.

"You've been around this long enough and you've seen it," Giddings said. "The teams that are player led are the ones that are always going to prosper when times get tough. I want to make sure that our guys are setting good examples and we're showing them what it looks like to be a leader. There's no doubt in my mind that this team is set up for success."

Two-time NASCAR Cup Series champion Busch dies at 41

BY STEVE REED
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CONCORD — Kyle Busch, a two-time Cup Series champion who won more races than anyone across NASCAR's three national series, has died. He was 41.

The Busch Family, Richard Childress Racing and NASCAR issued a joint statement Thursday saying Busch died after being hospitalized. No cause of death was given.

Busch's family said earlier Thursday that he was hospitalized with a "severe illness," three days before he was to compete in the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

Busch was testing in the Chevrolet racing simulator in Concord on Wednesday when he became unresponsive and was transported to a hospital in Charlotte, several people familiar with the situation told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because details have not been disclosed by Busch's team or family.

Busch was the younger brother of Kurt Busch, a NASCAR Hall of Famer. He's survived by wife Samantha and children Brexton and Lennix.

"Our entire NASCAR family is heartbroken by the loss of Kyle Busch," the statement said. "A future Hall of

Famer, Kyle was a rare talent, one who comes along once in a generation. He was fierce, he was passionate, he was immensely skilled and he cared deeply about the sport and fans."

The statement went on to say that "throughout a career that spanned more than two decades, Kyle set records in national series wins, won championships at NASCAR's highest level and fostered the next generation of drivers as an owner in the Truck Series. His sharp wit and competitive spirit sparked a deep emotional connection with race fans of every age, creating the proud and loyal 'Rowdy Nation.'"

TITLE

FROM PAGE A5

When the Warriors traveled to South Iredell to play game two, they knew they had to jump early just like they did Tuesday.

"We went into the game knowing that they were going to be good competition," Blakney said. "We jumped on their pitcher (senior Caroline Constable) early and we got settled in pretty fast. Taking game one was huge. It set the tone, but coming into (the second) game, was playing as if it was a one and done (game). We knew they were going to hit the ball and we had to play defense. It all

worked out."

Thomas won both games in the circle and struck out a total of 28 South Iredell batters. She also improved her pitching record to 25-0, while also looking forward to finishing her career the right way by putting the Warriors in permanent glory.

"I'm excited that we're able to have this opportunity again because it's not every day that you get to do this twice in your high school career," Thomas said. "It's very special and I think it's something that we should enjoy and savor every moment that we're able to spend with each other with our teammates and the whole experience."

Weddington will play

the winner of the Heritage-DH Conley softball regional series next week. The Heritage Huskies won game one by a score of 11-7 on the road but lost in game two at home by a score of 8-4. The two teams will meet at DH Conley for the final game of the series Friday to determine who will play the Warriors next week.

Regardless, the "job's not finished."

"We still have (two to three) games to go, and we're going to continue to put in the work and play our game and hopefully come out on top," Blakney said. "We all deep down trust each other and want it just as much as the person beside us. We are going to work together and get the job done."

LEGAL NOTICE CITY OF MONROE BUDGET HEARING NOTICE PUBLIC HEARING

The City Manager of the City of Monroe has submitted to the members of the Monroe City Council the Manager's Recommended Budget for Fiscal Year 2027 on May 12, 2026.

The budget is available for public inspection in the City Clerk's office at City Hall, 300 West Crowell Street, Monroe, NC, from 8:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. It is also available on the City's website at <https://www.monroenc.org>

There will be a public hearing on the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2027 at 6:00 p.m. on May 26, 2026 at the City Hall Council Chambers. Any persons who wish to be heard on the budget may appear and make written or oral comments.

Any person may request an accommodation for a disabling condition in order to attend the meeting This request should be made to the City Clerk at (704) 282-4528.

The budget is summarized as follows:

FUND	BUDGET AMOUNT
General	\$ 65,352,355
Center Theatre	1,124,777
Parks & Recreation	2,811,070
Golf Course	2,647,531
GF Capital Projects	450,000
Aquatics Center	5,727,807
Occupancy Tax Projects	322,699
Downtown	586,152
Police Forfeiture	198,000
Water & Sewer	27,034,239
Water & Sewer Reserve	4,985,499
Water & Sewer Capital Projects	1,000,000
Stormwater	3,091,351
Stormwater Capital Projects	175,000
Electric	68,351,911
Electric Capital Projects	6,700,051
Natural Gas	26,135,489
Natural Gas Capital Projects	4,225,000
Airport	5,139,965
Solid Waste	5,127,814
Total	\$ 231,186,710

Mark Watson
City Manager/Budget Officer



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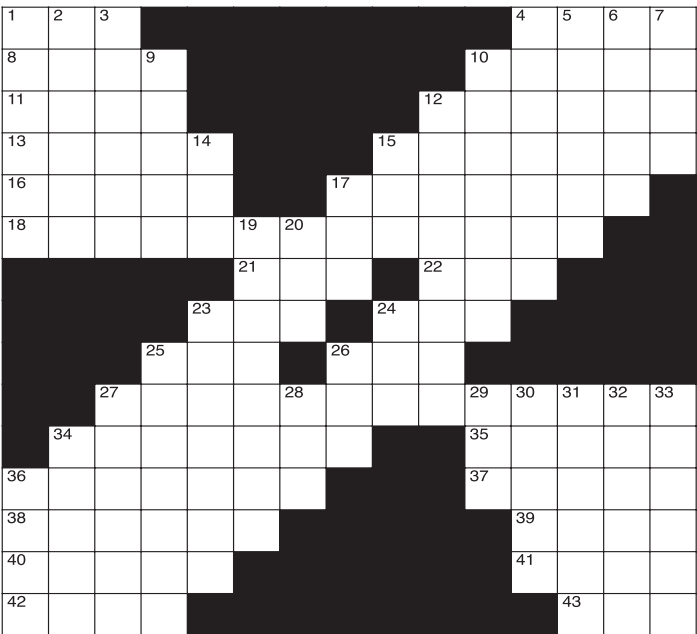
Computer Skills & Customer Service Skills

No Sales Experience Necessary

If interested, send resume and why you would be a good candidate to

loneil@thelancasternews.com

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



CLUES ACROSS

1. Government lawyers
4. The back of a person’s neck
8. Mild yellow Dutch cheese
10. In a less flashy way
11. Living room piece
12. Shepherd dog
13. A citizen of Iran
15. Moved slowly
16. Small finch
17. Previously
18. What a kid does on Halloween
21. Monetary unit
22. Using dry humor
23. Ocean
24. Greek goddess of the dawn
25. Not close
26. NHL legend Bobby
27. A ballplayer would love to do this
34. Charity
35. City in Finland
36. Loomed over
37. Vaccine developer
38. Avoids capture
39. We all need it
40. Openwork fabrics
41. Get away
42. Something you might hit
43. Soviet Socialist Republic

CLUES DOWN

1. Abstain from
2. Admirer
3. Expedition to observe animals
4. Act that is legally void
5. WW2 combatants
6. A tool
7. Looked at
9. Showing wild excitement
10. Banknotes
12. Tired
14. Printers need it
15. Women’s patriotic group
17. When you anticipate getting somewhere
19. Functions
20. Breed of sheep
23. Mocking pieces
24. A major division of geological time
25. Andiron
26. Many not ands
27. Cuban city
28. He voiced “Olaf”
29. Criticize
30. “Thundercats” character
31. Markings
32. Gets up
33. MLB lefty reliever A.J.
34. An assembly of witches
36. High energy lasers (abbr.)

PHOTO FINISH WORD SEARCH



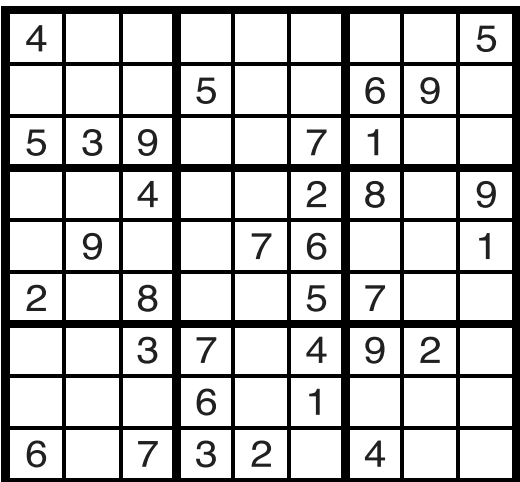
Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

- APERTURE
BOKEH
COMPOSITION
CONTRAST
DARKROOM
DEPTH
EXPOSURE
FLASH
FOCAL
HISTOGRAM
ISO
LANDSCAPE
LENS
MACRO
NEGATIVE
PORTRAIT
REFLECTOR
RESOLUTION
SATURATION
SENSOR
SHUTTER
TRIPOD
VIEWFINDER
VIGNETTE



- A.** 3 14 20 2 2 23 25
Clue: Camera barrier
- B.** 26 10 16 7 23
Clue: Picture
- C.** 9 26 8 23 3
Clue: Organized data
- D.** 8 16 11 1 3 5 16 6 23
Clue: Horizontal position



Level: Beginner

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to the photography.

LNSE



Answer: Lens

CELEBRITY BIRTHDAYS

- May 17
May 18
May 19
May 20
May 21
May 22
May 23
- Josh Homme, Musician (53)
George Strait, Singer (74)
JoJo Siwa, Dancer (23)
Cher, Singer (80)
Mr. T, Actor (74)
Ginnifer Goodwin, Actress (48)
Jewel, Singer (52)

GUESS WHO ?

I am a country singer born in Texas on May 21, 1987. I started playing music at age 12 and worked for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. I was named a New Male Vocalist of the Year in 2011, and by 2014, my breakthrough album cracked the Top 10 on Billboard’s chart.

Answer: Cody Johnson

HOROSCOPES

ARIES — Mar 21/Apr 20 — Slow down to smell the roses, Aries. You’ve been running at full speed, and your body is asking for a break. A low-key evening at home will recharge your batteries for a big weekend.

TAURUS — Apr 21/May 21 — Creativity hits you in an unexpected place, Taurus. It might even come while you’re doing chores. Explore a new idea thoroughly, as it might be the creative spark you’ve been looking for.

GEMINI — May 22/Jun 21 — A misunderstanding is cleared up by a simple phone call, Gemini. Don’t let a text message stew in your mind. Direct communication is the only way to keep your peace of mind this week.

CANCER — Jun 22/Jul 22 — Focus on your workspace, Cancer. A little reorganization and some new decor will shift the energy and help you focus. You’ll be surprised how much your environment affects your output.

LEO — Jul 23/Aug 23 — Your generosity is noted, Leo. Helping a colleague or friend with a thankless task will earn you major karma points. Expect a small, pleasant surprise to come back to you.

VIRGO — Aug 24/Sept 22 — Virgo, steer clear of over-analyzing a recent social interaction. You did fine, and people enjoyed your company. Focus on the future instead of replaying the past on a loop.

LIBRA — Sept 23/Oct 23 — A financial risk might be tempting, but the stars suggest sticking to the plan for now, Libra. Focus on “slow and steady” gains rather than “get rich quick” schemes this week.

SCORPIO — Oct 24/Nov 22 — You’re feeling extra protective of your time, Scorpio, and that’s okay. Saying “no” to an invitation isn’t a rejection of the person; it’s an investment in your own mental health.

SAGITTARIUS — Nov 23/Dec 21 — Laughter is your best medicine this week, Sagittarius. Seek a person who always makes you giggle. A lighthearted approach to a serious problem will reveal the simplest solution.

CAPRICORN — Dec 22/Jan 20 — Your reputation is preceding you in a good way, Capricorn. Someone in a position of power has their eye on your work. Keep your standards high; the payoff is closer than you think.

AQUARIUS — Jan 21/Feb 18 — Aquarius, an old hobby is calling your name. Dust off those tools or that camera. Reconnecting with a past passion will give you the emotional boost you’ve been looking for.

PISCES — Feb 19/Mar 20 — Trust the timing of your life, Pisces. Something you wanted didn’t work out, but that’s because something better is currently in the works. Keep your heart open and your head up.



Holiday FACT:

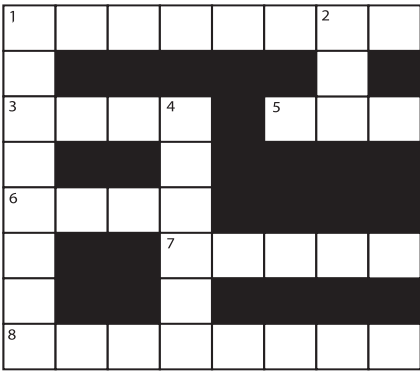
These North American holidays during the month of May may be times when people host guests and serve grilled food.

Answer: Memorial Day, Victoria Day

“How they say that in...”

- English:** Grill
Spanish: Parrilla
Italian: Griglia
French: Grill
German: Grill

Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

1. Cuts of beef
3. Curved bones
5. Not high
6. At any time
7. Type of oil
8. Contains a letter

DOWN

1. Slow-cooked food
2. In addition
4. A way to hit something

- Across
1. Briskets 3. Ribs 5. Low 6. Ever 7. Olive
- Down
1. Barbecue 2. Too 4. Stroke 8. Envelope

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



1535: French explorer Jacques Cartier sets sail on his second North American voyage.

1911: Parks Canada, the world’s first national park service, is established.

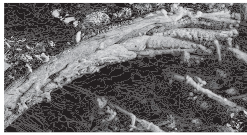
1962: Marilyn Monroe sings “Happy Birthday” to President John F. Kennedy.

NEW WORD

PELLETS

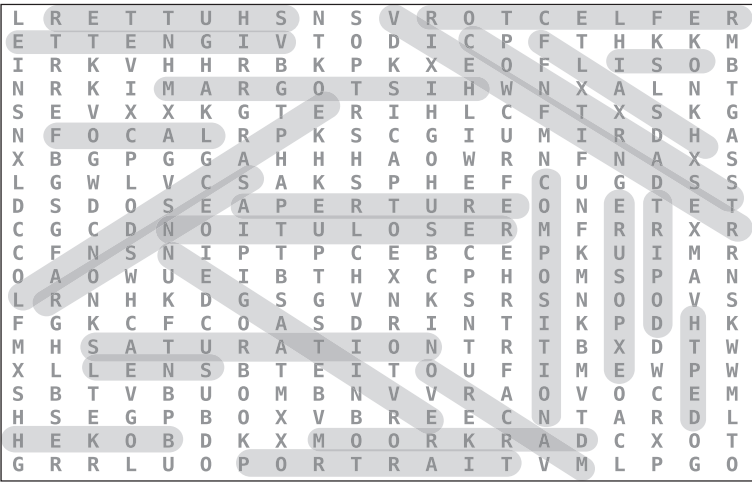
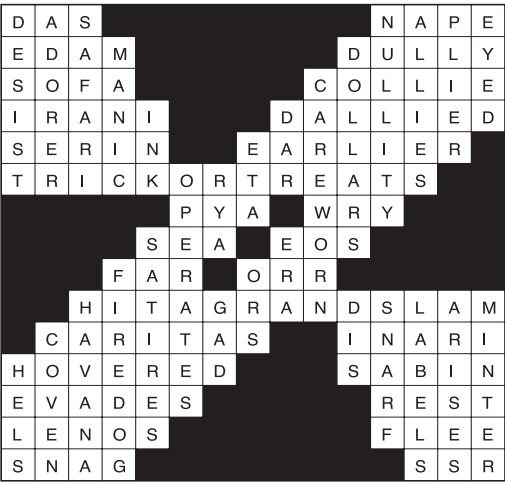
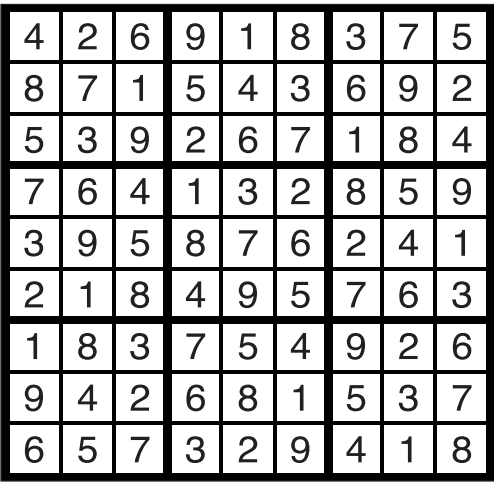
small, compressed cylinders used for cooking and heating

Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: BBQ ribs



CLASSIFIEDS

0100 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF UNION

**IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION
BEFORE THE CLERK
FILE#26E000484-890**

EXECUTOR-ADMINISTRATOR

Having duly qualified before the Honorable Wendy Maynard, Clerk of Superior Court of Union County, as Personal Representative for the Estate of Betty W Owens, Deceased. This is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned on or before 11th day of August, 2026 or same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Es-

0900 LEGALS

tate please make immediate payment.

This 9th day of May, 2026.

Executor-Administrator
Catherine M Smith
2909 Faulks Church Rd
Wingate, NC 28174

May 9, 16, 23, 30, 2026

CITY OF MONROE LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held by the City Council of the City of Monroe, North Carolina on May 26, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. The public hearing will be held in the Council Chambers located at City Hall, 300 West Crowell Street in Monroe, North Carolina. The public hearing will consider:

RESOLUTION OF INTENT TO ABANDON PORTION OF A 38-FOOT RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR WINDSOR STREET FROM EASTERN RIGHT-OF-WAY OF HARLEY STREET TO EASTERN PROPERTY LINE OF LOT 10 OF DR. B. C. REDFERN SUBDIVISION R-2026-19

THAT WHEREAS, the City of Monroe proposes to permanently abandon a portion of the 38-foot right-of-way of Windsor Street pursuant to North Carolina General Statute Section 160A-299 starting at eastern right-of-way of Harley Street to the eastern property line of Lot 10 of the Dr. B. C. Redfern subdivision recorded in Plat Book 2, Page 120, about 379 linear feet in length.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Monroe City Council declares its intent to permanently abandon a portion of the 38-foot right-of-way of Windsor Street pursuant to North Carolina General Statute Section 160A-299 starting at eastern right-of-way of Harley Street to the eastern property line of Lot 10 of the Dr. B. C. Redfern subdivision recorded in Plat Book 2, Page 120, about 379 linear feet in length.

The City Council orders that a public hearing be called on the question at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 26, 2026. The City Clerk is hereby directed to: publish a copy of this Resolution in a newspaper authorized to publish legal ads in the City of Monroe as required by statute; send a copy of this Resolution by certified or registered mail to

0900 LEGALS

all owners of the property adjoining the street as shown on the tax records; and, cause a notice of the closing and public hearing to be prominently posted in at least two places along said street.

For additional information, please contact Sarah McAllister at 704-282-4532 or smcallister@monroenc.org. Copies of any proposed documents are available for public inspection in the office of the City Clerk. Persons interested are invited to attend the hearing and present their views for or against the proposed request. The Mayor reserves the right to adjourn the meeting to a place and time to be announced at said hearing. As a result of the public hearing, there is the possibility of substantial changes being made to the advertised proposals, reflecting objections, debate and discussion at the hearing. Any person may request an accommodation for a disabling condition in order to attend the hearing. This request should be made to the City Clerk at 704-282-4502.

By Order of the City Council
Bridgette H. Robinson,
City Clerk

May 2, 9, 16, 23, 2026

CITY OF MONROE LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that public hearings will be held by the City Council of the City of Monroe, North Carolina on May 26, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. The public hearings will be held in the Council Chambers located at City Hall, 300 West Crowell Street in Monroe, North Carolina.

The public hearings will consider the following:

- Zoning map amendment request to rezone the properties located at 4920 Secrest Shortcut Road (Tax Parcel #s 08-303-003C and 08-303-003A) from Regional Corridor Mixed-Use to Residential Low Density. For information on this project, please contact Patrick Blaszyk at 704-282-4550 or pblaszyk@monroenc.org

- Zoning map amendment request to rezone the property located at 605 Treeway Drive (Tax Parcel # 09-084-008A) from Residential Medium Density to General Industrial. For information on this project, please contact Keri Menderler at 704-282-5797 or kmenderler@monroenc.org

0900 LEGALS

Copies of any proposed documents are available for public inspection in the office of the City Clerk. Persons interested are invited to attend the hearings and present their views for or against the proposed requests. The Mayor reserves the right to adjourn the meeting to a place and time to be announced at said hearings. As a result of the public hearings, there is the possibility of substantial changes being made to the advertised proposals, reflecting objections, debates and discussions at the hearings. Any person may request an accommodation for a disabling condition in order to attend the hearings. This request should be made to the City Clerk at 704-282-4502.

By Order of the City Council
Bridgette H. Robinson,
City Clerk

May 16 and 23, 2026

CITY OF MONROE LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that public hearings will be held by the City Council of the City of Monroe, North Carolina on May 26, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers located at 300 West Crowell Street in Monroe, North Carolina to consider the award of a Level IV Incentive Grant to Monroe Hospitality, LLC for a Downtown Hotel Project under the City's Economic Development Grant Program. This grant is based on the company's projected capital investment of Forty-Million Dollars (\$40,000,000), which would result in a City of Monroe Level IV Grant to be paid over five years. The actual grant amount will depend on the Union County Tax Administration Office's actual assessed values of qualifying investments as determined each year and actual applicable grant factors as established each year the grant is awarded.

Copies of any proposed documents are available for public inspection in the office of the City Clerk. Persons interested are invited to attend the hearing and present their views for or against the proposed request. The Mayor reserves the right to adjourn the meeting to a place and time to be announced at said hearing. As a result of the public hearing, there is the possibility of substantial changes being made to the advertised proposals, reflecting objections, debate and discussion at the hearing. Any person may request an accommodation for a disabling condition in order to attend the hearing. This request should be made to the City Clerk at 704-282-4502.

By Order of the City Council
Bridgette H. Robinson,
City Clerk

May 16 and 23, 2026

CITY OF MONROE LEGAL NOTICE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held by the Board of Adjustment of the City of Monroe, North Carolina on the 28 th day of May, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 300 W. Crowell Street, Monroe, NC to consider the following:

PLZONA-2026-00169-Appeal application from Steven Polk of Stevens Repair Service regarding Planning Staff's zoning determination of a golf cart repair and sales business operating at 1109 Cyrus Edwards Road. (Parcel ID #09-143-021)

PLSUP-2026-00171-Special Use Permit request from Robert Hansen for an addition that has been added to the manufactured home at 4924 Myers Road. (Parcel ID #07-027-003)

PLSUP 2026-00153-Special Use Permit request by Thomas Walsh on behalf of Pappas Properties to allow a convenience store with fuel pumps in the Neighborhood Business (NB) District at 3120 Goldmine Road. (Parcel ID #09-342-123)

Persons interested are invited to attend the hearings and present their views for or against the proposed request.

As a result of the public hearing, there is the possibility of substantial changes being made to the advertised proposals, reflecting objections, debate and discussion at the hearings.

The Chairman reserves the right to adjourn the meeting to a place and time to be announced at said hearings.

Any person may request an accommodation for a disabling condition in order to attend the hearing. This request should be made to the Clerk of the Board at 704-282-4527.

By Order of the Board of Adjustment
Kimberly Davis
Clerk to the Board of Adjustment

May 23, 2026

0900 LEGALS

CITY OF MONROE LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that public hearings will be held by the City Council of the City of Monroe, North Carolina on May 26, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers located at City Hall, 300 West Crowell Street in Monroe, North Carolina to consider under the City's Downtown Economic Development Grant Program the following:

- Building Rehabilitation and Improvement Grant– Bill Heisner, owner of 109 S Main Street, has applied and met the eligible requirements for this grant program. The Building Rehabilitation and Improvement Grant is a matching 50/50 downtown grant program with a maximum award of \$7,500 designed to provide assistance with building maintenance and improvements within the central downtown business district. Mr. Heisner will be repainting and improving lighting at 109 S Main Street. Total project costs are \$4,500. Mr. Heisner is eligible for a reimbursement of 50% of the project costs, not to exceed \$2,250. Proof of payment for the full amount of the project is required before funds are released. For information on this project, please contact Ashley Nowell at 704-292-1705 or anowell@monroenc.org

- Grow Monroe Downtown Grant – Superior Home Medical Supply owner, Courtney Stevens-Garrison, has applied and met the eligible requirements for this grant program. The Grow Monroe Grant is a matching 50/50 downtown grant program designed to provide assistance with rental expenses and/or up-fit expenses for expanding businesses in the central downtown business district. Awards are determined using a formula based square footage. Superior Home Medical Supply is currently located at 108 S Main Street Street, and will be expanding into the neighboring storefront at 106 S Main Street. The expanded space is 1,080 square foot, and an expanding retail business is eligible for \$4/sqft, for a total of \$4,320 through this grant program. Ms. Stevens-Garrison has applied for \$4,320 in rent subsidy. Rent subsidy will be paid 50% after six and the remaining 50% after twelve months. Proof of timely payment for the full amount of rent is required before funds are released. For information on this project, please contact Ashley Nowell at 704-292-1705 or anowell@monroenc.org

Copies of any proposed documents are available for public inspection in the office of the City Clerk. Persons interested are invited to attend the hearings and present their views for or against the proposed requests. The Mayor reserves the right to adjourn the meeting to a place and time to be announced at said hearings. As a result of the public hearings, there is the possibility of substantial changes being made to the advertised proposals, reflecting objections, debates and discussions at the hearings. Any person may request an accommodation for a disabling condition in order to attend the hearings. This request should be made to the City Clerk at 704/282-4502.

By Order of the City Council
Bridgette H. Robinson,
City Clerk

May 16, 23, 2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF UNION

**IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION
BEFORE THE CLERK
FILE#26E000525-890**

EXECUTOR-ADMINISTRATOR

Having duly qualified before the Honorable Wendy Maynard, Clerk of Superior Court of Union County, as Personal Representative for the Estate of Dora Lorraine Belk aka Lorraine Parker Belk, Deceased. This is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned on or before 25th day of August, 2026 or same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate please make immediate payment.

This 23rd day of may, 2026.

Executor-Administrator
Robin Paulette Belk
3815 Faith Church Rd
Indian Trail, NC 28079

May 23, 30, June 6, 13, 2026



0900 LEGALS

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF UNION

**IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION
BEFORE THE CLERK
FILE#26E000479-890**

EXECUTOR-ADMINISTRATOR

Having duly qualified before the Honorable Wendy Maynard, Clerk of Superior Court of Union County, as Personal Representative for the Estate of Frances Anderson Godfrey, Deceased. This is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned on or before 25th day of August, 2026 or same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate please make immediate payment.

This 23rd day of May, 2026.

Executor-Administrator
Robin Griffin
300 Serenity Hills Dr
Monroe, NC 28110

May 23, 30, June 6, 13, 2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF UNION

**IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION
BEFORE THE CLERK
FILE#25E000115-890**

EXECUTOR-ADMINISTRATOR

Having duly qualified before the Honorable Wendy Maynard, Clerk of Superior Court of Union County, as Personal Representative for the Estate of Gennadiy Paylovich Nokhrin, Deceased. This is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned on or before 18th day of August, 2026 or same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate please make immediate payment.

This 16th day of May, 2026.

Executor-Administrator
NATALIYA NOKHRINA
2402 DEVON DR
MONROE, NC 28110

May 16, 23, 30, June 6, 2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF UNION

**IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION
BEFORE THE CLERK
FILE#26E000557-890**

EXECUTOR-ADMINISTRATOR

Having duly qualified before the Honorable Wendy Maynard, Clerk of Superior Court of Union County, as Personal Representative for the Estate of James A Lyons, Deceased. This is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned on or before 25th day of August, 2026 or same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate please make immediate payment.

This 23rd day of May, 2026.

Executor-Administrator
Thomas A Lyons
1200 Kerry Greens Dr
Stallings, NC 28104

May 23, 30, June 6, 13, 2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF UNION

**IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION
BEFORE THE CLERK
FILE#26E000511-890**

EXECUTOR-ADMINISTRATOR

Having duly qualified before the Honorable Wendy Maynard, Clerk of Superior Court of Union County, as Personal Representative for the Estate of Jessie L Bailey, Deceased. This is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned on or before 18th day of August, 2026 or same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate please make immediate payment.

This 16th day of May, 2026.

Executor-Administrator
Angela D McClendon
PO Box 1
6105 Eubanks Street
Mineral Springs, NC 28108

May 16, 23, 30, June 6, 2026

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

UPCOMING EVENTS

Alzheimer's Awareness Walk:

Taking place on Friday, June 26th from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Bazemore Active Adult Center. Organized in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association and the city of Monroe, this is a caregiver-focused event bringing together a small group of local organizations to provide education, support, and resources to families affected by dementia. It is open to the public at no cost.

ONGOING

Council on Aging Care & Share Support Group: In-person meetings at 10:15 a.m. on the second and fourth Mondays of each month at the Council on Aging in Union County, 1401 Skyway Drive, Monroe. Virtual meetings at 4 p.m. on the first and third Fridays of the

month via Zoom.

Links sent via email prior to the meeting. For details, call Jesse Granger at (704) 292-1797.

Marshville Museum & Cultural Center: Open Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 201 North Elm St. Marshville. Exhibits change monthly.

We are an all-volunteer organization dedicated to promoting Union County history. For more information, please text or call (704) 560-3644.

Monroe Rotary Club: Noon on Tuesdays at Rolling Hills Country Club, 2722 West Roosevelt Blvd., Monroe.

Sewing/Quilting Group: 9 a.m. to noon, Tuesdays at St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Monroe, 909 Circle Drive, Monroe.

Union County Farmer's Market: 8 a.m. to noon each

Saturday at 805 Skyway Drive, Monroe.

Union County Writers Club: Meets on the third Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. in the Union County Community Arts Building, 327 South Hayne St., Monroe. For information call or text (704) 221-1958.

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

Fairview Town Council: Meets the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Fairview Town Hall, 7516 Concord Hwy., Fairview.

Indian Trail Town Council: Meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Indian Trail Town Hall, 315 Matthews-Indian Trail Road, Indian Trail.

Marshville Town Council: Meets on the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m., at 118 East

Union St., Marshville.

Marvin Village Council: Regular meetings are, unless otherwise noted, held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Village Hall, 10006 Village School Road, Marvin.

Mineral Springs Town Council: Meets on the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Mineral Springs Town Hall, 3506 Potter Road South in Mineral Springs.

Monroe City Council: Meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays each month at 4:30 p.m. (strategic meeting) and 6 p.m. (regular meeting) at City of Monroe City Hall, 300 West Crowell St., Monroe.

Stallings Town Council: Meets on the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 7 p.m. at Stallings Government Center, 315 Stallings Road, Stallings.

Unionville Town Council:

Meets on the third Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Unionville Town Hall, 1102 Unionville Church Road, Unionville.

Waxhaw Board of Commissioners: Meets on the second Tuesdays of each month at 6:30 p.m., and on the fourth Tuesdays of each month with a work session at 5:30 p.m. followed by the regular meeting at 6:30 p.m. All meetings are held at Waxhaw Town Hall, 4218 Waxhaw-Marvin Road, Waxhaw.

Weddington Town Council: Meets on the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at Weddington Town Hall, 1924 Weddington Road, Weddington.

Wingate Town Council: Meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Wingate Town Hall, 101 West Wilson St. in Wingate.



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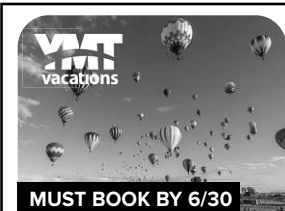
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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF UNION

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION BEFORE THE CLERK FILE#26E000414-890

EXECUTOR-ADMINISTRATOR

Having duly qualified before the Honorable Wendy Maynard, Clerk of Superior Court of Union County, as Personal Representative for the Estate of Joseph McDermott, Deceased. This is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned on or before 25th day of August, 2026 or same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate please make immediate payment.

This 23rd day of May, 2026.

Executor-Administrator Cheryl McDermott 1150 Dogwood Dr Lincolnwood NC 30817

May 23, 30, June 6, 13, 2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF UNION

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION BEFORE THE CLERK FILE#26E000454-890

EXECUTOR-ADMINISTRATOR

Having duly qualified before the Honorable Wendy Maynard, Clerk of Superior Court of Union County, as Personal Representative for the Estate of Kent Arrias Lyles, Deceased. This is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned on or before 4th day of August, 2026 or same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate please make immediate payment.

This 2nd day of May, 2026.

Executor-Administrator Rita Scott 5938 Akin Glen San Antonio, TX 78261

May 2, 9, 16, 23, 2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF UNION

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION BEFORE THE CLERK FILE#26E000548-890

EXECUTOR-ADMINISTRATOR

Having duly qualified before the Honorable Wendy Maynard, Clerk of Superior Court of Union County, as Personal Representative for the Estate of Laura Juanita Helms Godfrey aka Juanita Helms Godfrey, Deceased. This is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned on or before 25th day of August, 2026 or same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Es-

0900 LEGALS

tate please make immediate payment.

This 23rd day of May, 2026.

Executor-Administrator David Harry Godfrey 2204 New Town Rd Monroe, NC 28110

May 23, 30, June 6, 13, 2026

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION

Having qualified as Executor of the Estate of Nancy Carol Mangum, deceased, late of Union County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against said estate to present them, duly verified, to the undersigned at 344 West John Street, Matthews, NC 28105, on or before August 23, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate settlement with the undersigned.

This the 23 rd day of May, 2026.

Cinde Dale Stinson, Administrator of the Estate of Nancy Carol Mangum, Union County File No. 26E000517-890, c/o Garrity Gossage, LLP, 344 West John Street, Matthews, NC 28105.

May 23, 30, June 6, 13, 2026

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR APPROVAL OF JAIL BONDS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN of intention of the County of Union, North Carolina to file application with the Local Government Commission, Raleigh, North Carolina for its approval of the issuance of general obligation bonds of the County of Union, North Carolina which shall be for the following purpose and in the following maximum amount:

\$200,000,000 of bonds to pay the capital costs of providing for the design, construction, furnishing and equipping of a new jail facility.

Any citizen or taxpayer of the County of Union, North Carolina objecting to the issuance of said bonds, within seven days after the date of publication of this notice, may file with the Local Government Commission, Longleaf Building, 3200 Atlantic Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27604, Attention: Secretary, and with the Board of Commissioners of the County of Union, North Carolina, a written statement setting forth each objection to the proposed bond issue and such statement shall contain the name and address of the person filing it.

COUNTY OF UNION, NORTH CAROLINA

/s/ Lynn West
Lynn West
Clerk to the Board
County of Union,
North Carolina

May 23, 2026

Fill Your Purse Through the Classifieds

0900 LEGALS

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION

Having qualified as Administrator of the Estate of James Floyd Crowell, deceased, late of Union County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against said estate to present them, duly verified, to the undersigned at 344 West John Street, Matthews, NC 28105, on or before August 16, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate settlement with the undersigned.

This the 16th day of May, 2026.

Jamie M. Crowell, Administrator of the Estate of James Floyd Crowell, Union County File No. 26E000416-890, c/o Garrity & Gossage, LLP, 344 West John Street, Matthews, NC 28105. 4ts: 5/16, 23, 30; 6/6, 2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF UNION

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION BEFORE THE CLERK FILE#26E000508-890

EXECUTOR-ADMINISTRATOR

Having duly qualified before the Honorable Wendy Maynard, Clerk of Superior Court of Union County, as Personal Representative for the Estate of Joyce Young Parr, Deceased.

This is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned on or before 18th day of August, 2026 or same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate please make immediate payment.

This 16th day of May, 2026.

Executor-Administrator Linda Naddeo 4205 Deerfield Dr. Monroe, NC 28112

May 16, 23, 30, June 6, 2026

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Please note on Friday, May 15, 2026, the proposed annual operating budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 for the Village of Marvin, NC was distributed to the Marvin Village Council and has been made available for public inspection in the Clerk's Office at Marvin Village Hall, Monday through Thursday from 10am to 2pm.

Please note that the Marvin Village Council has called for public hearing to be held on Monday, June 1, 2026, at 6pm at Marvin Village Hall (10006 Marvin School Road) for the purpose of receiving public comment on the proposed Village of Marvin Annual Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027, for which the Village Council will consider adoption at the same meeting.

Austin W. Yow
Clerk, Village of Marvin

May 16, 23, 2026

0900 LEGALS

Public Notice of Budget Hearing

The 2026 – 2027 proposed budget for the Town of Marshville has been presented to the Board and is available for public inspection at Marshville Town Hall (118 E. Union Street) on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., as well as online.

A public hearing will be held on Monday, June 01, 2026, at 7:00 pm at Marshville Town Hall to receive comments on the proposed budget.

In accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Town of Marshville does not discriminate on the basis of disability in conducting its meetings. Individuals with disabilities who require accommodation to participate effectively should contact 704-624-2515 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

May 23, 2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF UNION

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION BEFORE THE CLERK FILE#26E000518-890

EXECUTOR-ADMINISTRATOR

Having duly qualified before the Honorable Wendy Maynard, Clerk of Superior Court of Union County, as Personal Representative for the Estate of Roy Lawrence Helms, Deceased. This is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned on or before 25th day of August, 2026 or same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate please make immediate payment.

This 23rd day of May, 2026.

Executor-Administrator Dawn Consider 3725 Glen Meadows Drive Denver, NC 28037

May 23, 30, June 6, 13, 2026

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-Part B, Public Law 108.446) Project is presently being amended. The Project describes the special education programs that Union Day School proposes for Federal funding for the 2026-2027 School Year. Interested persons are encouraged to review amendments to the Project and make comments concerning the implementation of special education under this Federal Program. All comments will be considered prior to submission of the amended Project to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh, North Carolina. The IDEA-Part B Project is open to the public for review and comments on 5/28/2026 and 5/29/2026 in the office of Michael Nardelli, EC Director, located at 3000 Tilley Morris Road, Weddington, NC 28104.

May 23, 27, 2026

SAY HELLO! IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

0900 LEGALS

Bid packages are listed below, and additional bid packages may be added or deleted at the discretion of the Construction Manager. Only Bids from Pre-qualified firms will be accepted. All bids, formal and informal, will be opened and read aloud.

General Trades -01.0; Final Cleaning-01.1; Building Concrete & Tilt Wall – 03.0; Masonry-04.0; Structural & Misc. Steel – 05.0; Millwork-06.0; Waterproofing/Dampproofing/Sealants/Spray Foam/Firestop-07.0; Roofing & Metal Wall Panels-07.1;Doors/Frames/Hardware-08.0; Overhead Doors>Loading Dock Equip.-08.1; Glass & Glazing-08.2; Automatic Sliding Doors – 08.3; Drywall and X-Ray Walls-09.0; Acoustical Ceilings-09.1; Flooring-09.2; Hard Tile-09.3; Fluid Applied Flooring & Sanitary Walls-09.4; Painting-09.5; Signage-10.0; Specialties-10.1; Laboratory Equipment-11.0; Morgue Equipment-11.1; Laboratory Casework-12.0; Blinds and Shades-12.1; Cold Rooms-13.0; Fire Protection-21.0; Plumbing-22.0; HVAC-23.0; Electrical-26.0; Sitework-31.0; Site Concrete-31.1; Fencing-32.0; Landscaping-32.1

A pre-bid meeting will be held on Tuesday June 2, 2026 at 2:00PM at The Hub Conference Center 5501 Seventy Seven Center Drive Charlotte. Site is open for visits.

Sealed Bids will be due by 2:00 PM, June 25, 2026, at The Hub Conference Center 5501 Seventy-Seven Center Drive Charlotte, NC. Bids to be submitted to Construction Manager Wharton Smith.

If for any reason the CMAR does not receive the required number of bids to open any bid package, the rebid date is scheduled for Thursday July 2, 2026.

Prequalified Bidders can reach out to citeminating@wharton-smith.com to request link to the construction documents.

Wharton-Smith reserves the right to modify the above bid packages as needed. The Construction Manager and Owner reserve the right to reject any and all bids received.

May 23, 2026



Find a new favorite store by looking for local businesses advertising in your newspaper!



K-12 Tuition-Free NC Public Charter School
UNION ACADEMY
Challenge. Character. Community.
Mr. Jim Zorn, High School Principal

CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF 2026!



Tyler James Acoven	Cianna Abree Delia	Raley Marie Huneycutt	Bella Hailey Mitchell	Ruby Lane Sheffield
Melanie Alejandro	Cameron Michael Demers	Brooke Autumn Johns	Adam Harvey Moore	Elijah Zamarion Shine
Joseph Benjamin Alexander	Miracle Ashaunti DeMoss	Reese Katherine Jones	Mariana Renee Morales	Amani Micole Simpson
Carolina Rebecca Ambrose	Adeline Grace Dommer	Alexander John Kalisz	Juliana Sofia Morales	Landon Alexander Smith
Kelsey Xiaomin Baker	Micheal Anthony Donato	Aiden Michael Kingsley	Sophia Juliet Mosblech	Jordan Clifton Smith
Sara Adair Baker	Abbigail Lyn Dye	Christopher Shane Kirby	Grayson Emily Moss	Lily Grace Starnes
Cohen Joseph Barbee	Andres Alessandro Echeverry	Katherine Alexandria Kobera	Brave Gael Ndizihiwe	Lillian Elizabeth Strachan
Mikayla DeAndrea Bethea	Clayton Neal Edwards	Kendall Ann Leak	Elizabeth Jane Nichols	Yasmin Caroline Stringer
McKenna Lynn Bovender	Damien Xavier Elkins	Harrison Jerome Lee	Daniel Olivan Parias	Zavianah Praise Sturdivant
Isabella Marie Bramhall	Alexander Walker Evans	Elizabeth Ann Lee	Emma Kate Patti	Jackson Storm Supernavage
Joseph Thomas Bratchie	Isaac Asbury Evans	John Carlos Leon	Isabella Grace Perry	Taylor Marie Surratt
Dylan Jacob Broadway	Bailey Tate Evans	Hayley Savannah Licourt	Sydney Grace Phillips	Kennedy Clare Taylor
Payton Renée Brooks	Lillyanne Macy Fox	Connor Paul Lindley	Matthew Scott Poole	Destiny Arianna Tillman
Dylan Chandler Brown	Colby Mason Fox	Ashlynn Claire Longo	Rodrigo Pradillo Benito	Eduardo Torres-Rojas
Brenda Elizabeth Brown	Isabella Christina Garcia	Dylan Patrick Lucas	Elena Denise Quinonez	Nikolaos Tsatsoulis
Colton Lee Brucke	Hadassa Garcia-Salinas	Isabella Jane Lucas	Alaina Grace Rautanen	Eli Brody Tyson
Cole Brooks Bullock	Kayda Faith Geyer	Julianne Lauren Magbitang	Raegan Ashleigh Reddick	Talan Andrew Valdez
Samantha Michelle Byrd	Stephanie Mackenzie Gibson	Andrew Hans Maloney	Braeden James Reynolds	Lindsay Ann Van Art
Raphaela Fenerich Carani	Stephen Javier Gonzales	Sophia Katherine Maltese	Gabriella Rae Rhodes	Patrik Veteska
Breanna Jo Carpenter	Faith Deborah Griffin	Conner Pace Martin	Trinity Lynn Robinette	Spiro Nick Vlahos
London Brielle Clark	Grace Naomi Griffin	Cooper Dallas Martin	Peter Covert Robison	Matthew David Walsh
Savannah Grace Cohen	Brady Marvin Hargett	Noah Craig Martin	Yariel Ricardo Rodriguez Gonzalez	Addison Kent Watkins
Ryan Eugene Cole	Roman Michael Hartline	Brianna Jasmin Mason	Jeremiah Greyson Rouse	Madison Ann Webber
Danny Coria-Pavon	Jarel Tyrese Hickmon	John Nicholas Mateosky	Ethan Brandon Emmanuel Rowe	Lillian Isabelle Wheeler
Savannah Jane Criddle	James Crawford Hightower	Bailey Ashe McManus	Maria Ashley Saas	Kaitlyn Elizabeth Willmer
Kayden Blair Crooke	Isabella Kendall Hoffman	Marissa Bailey McMurray	Johnathan David Sawyer	Avery Lane Wilson
Brooklynn Marie Cruz	Aubry Lynn Holmes	Cora Ann Medlin	Lauren Elizabeth Seaford	Madison Jade-Anne Wilson
Nicole Sophia Currea	Grace Margaret Hopper	Aubrey Lynn Mekus	Mary Louise Seaford	Maxim Sergei Wilson
Nicholas Victor Damato	Brinkley McKenzie Housand	Bryce Donovan Melton	Tyler William Sellers	Myers Tate Wood
Corneliu Danila	Elliot Alexander Huffman	Brylee Ann Mendoza	Reichen Anderson Nigel Shauan	Oliver Steven Wootton
John Dominic Dare	Marco Antonio Huinac Chanax	Zachary Lee Michaud	Skylar Faith Shaw	Samantha Grace Young

2026 SENIOR CLASS OFFICERS



Brinkley Housand
Student Council
President



Brody Tyson
Student Council
Vice President



Libby Nichols
Senior Class
President



Samantha Byrd
Senior Class
Vice President



Katie Kobera
Senior Class
2nd Vice President



Kennedy Taylor
Senior Class
Secretary



Grace Hopper
Senior Class
Treasurer

2026 SENIOR AWARDS

Ken Templeton Head of School Award
Grace Hopper

Ron Brown Cornerstone Award
Brinkley Housand

Excellence in English
Grace Griffin

Excellence in Mathematics
Aiden Kingsley

Excellence in Social Studies
Grace Hopper

Excellence in Communications/Technology
Aubry Holmes

Excellence in Science
Grace Hopper

Excellence in Art
Faith Griffin

Excellence in Instrumental Music
Aiden Kingsley

Excellence in Business
Grace Hopper

Premio a la Excelencia en Español
Mikayla Bethea

Excellence in Theatre
Madison Webber

Excellence in Vocal Music
Raley Huneycutt
Ashlynn Longo

Excellence in Agriculture
Aubrey Mekus

Female Scholar Athlete
Grace Hopper

Male Scholar Athlete
Maxim Wilson

2026 SENIOR STATISTICS

Total Graduates: 153

2026 Seniors enrolled into college (2- or 4- year) or career-education programs: 87%

Class of 2026 contributed more than 22,120 community service hours in their high school years.

Thank you, Seniors, for your dedication to our school and community.

NATION&WORLD

Rubio reports ‘slight progress’ in Iran talks

Pakistan renews efforts to mediate a peace deal

BY SAM MEDNICK, SAMY MAGDY AND MUNIR AHMED
ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEL AVIV, Israel — U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Friday that “slight progress” was made during talks with Iran as Pakistan’s army chief traveled to Tehran in a renewed effort to mediate a peace deal and uncertainty loomed over whether the war would resume.

Rubio spoke days after U.S. President Donald Trump said he was holding off on a military strike against the Islamic Republic because “serious negotiations” were underway. Trump has been threatening for weeks that the ceasefire reached in mid-April could end if Iran does not make a deal, with shifting parameters for striking such an agreement.

America’s top diplomat made the comment ahead of a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Helsingborg, Sweden, where the military alliance discussed what role it could play in helping police the Strait of Hormuz once the war is over.

Rubio said he did not want to exaggerate the progress, saying there had been “a little bit of movement and that’s good.” In recent weeks, repeated claims of progress have emerged, but a deal has stayed out of reach.

Trump has repeatedly set deadlines for Tehran and then backed off. But he’s also previously indicated he would hold off on military action to allow talks to play out, only to turn around and launch strikes. That happened at the war’s outset, when he ordered strikes in late February shortly after indicating he would let talks play out.



United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio, right, and Sweden's Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stennergard shake hands during a signing ceremony on the sidelines of a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Helsingborg, Sweden, on Friday.

The president said he called off attacks on Iran this week at the request of allies in the Middle East.

PAKISTAN’S ARMY CHIEF ARRIVES IN IRAN FOR THIRD ROUND OF TALKS

In a renewed push for a peace agreement, Pakistan’s top army officer arrived Friday in Tehran for talks with Iranian leaders, Pakistani officials and the military confirmed. It’s the third round of meetings between Pakistani and Iranian officials in recent days.

Field Marshal Asim Munir will be joined by Pakistan’s interior minister, who has already met with Iranian leaders in Tehran twice this week. Pakistan has sought a deal between Iran and the U.S. since Munir facilitated face-to-face talks between the two countries in Islamabad last

month.

Qatar also sent a delegation to Tehran, according to a regional official who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the talks. The delegation is working in coordination with other countries, including Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the official said.

Iran has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for the shipment of oil, gas, fertilizer and other petroleum products. The U.S. is blockading Iranian ports and has redirected 94 commercial vessels and disabled four others since mid-April, U.S. Central Command said.

At the NATO meeting in Sweden, Rubio said he discussed reopening the strait with other foreign ministers. He said there needs to be a “plan B” if Washington and Tehran fail to reach a deal.

“Someone’s going to have to do something about it, OK?” Rubio said, insisting that Iran was not going to “voluntarily reopen” the strait.

NO MINES HAVE BEEN FOUND IN THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ

The American military has not found or destroyed any explosive mines in the Strait of Hormuz so far, but it is still searching, a U.S. official said Friday.

No ships have been struck or damaged by mines in the strait either, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military operations. That is even as some commercial traffic has been flowing, though at much lower volumes than before the war began.

Trump said last month that he ordered the military to begin mine-clearing efforts as

part of a broader push to get commercial ships to traverse the strait again following several attacks by Iran.

No evidence of mine-laying by the Iranians has emerged since the start of the conflict, and U.S. officials have repeatedly said that they targeted and destroyed that capability as part of the airstrikes across the country.

TRUMP’S WAR PAUSE SPARKS TENSION WITH NETANYAHU

Trump’s decision to give more peace talks a chance sparked tension with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

An official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media said Thursday that Trump and Netanyahu had a “dramatic” phone conversation Tuesday about the status of the Iranian negotiations and that Israel is angry with Trump’s efforts to strike a deal with Iran.

The White House declined to comment on the substance or tenor of the call. Trump told reporters after the conversation that Netanyahu “will do whatever I want him to do.”

The comments are some of the first public signs of daylight between the leaders since they launched the war.

SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UAE SEPARATELY STRUCK IRAN

Two regional officials and a Western diplomat said Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates separately launched multiple attacks on Iran and Iranian-backed Shiite militias in Iraq during the war. An Israeli military officer with knowledge of the situation also confirmed that the UAE proactively struck Iran at least once.

All of them spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the information.

Frustrated Indian youths flock to political party led by roach

BY SHEIKH SAALIQ
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW DELHI — It began as a satirical online project. Now millions of young Indians are flocking to it as an outlet for their frustration.

A parody political party called the Cockroach Janta Party, with the insect as its symbol, has exploded across India’s social media by turning absurdist humor into protest. Memes and short videos mocking corruption, joblessness and political dysfunction have flooded social media sites, where millions of users are embracing the cockroach — known for its ability to survive harsh conditions — as a tongue-in-cheek symbol of endurance.

The online movement’s rise has been unusually rapid. The Cockroach Janta Party, or CJP, set up its website and social media accounts on Saturday. By Thursday, its Instagram page had amassed more than 15 million followers, far surpassing the 8.8 million followers of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s governing Bharatiya Janata Party on the platform.

“Nothing of this was intentional,” CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke told The Associated Press, saying the movement’s rise reflected mounting frustration among young Indians.

“It is the younger people who were actually very frustrated. They didn’t have any outlet. They were really angry at the government,” said Dipke, a political communications strategist and Boston University student.



A man visits the web page of the newly formed Cockroach Janta Party on a laptop in Dharamshala, India, on Thursday.

COURTROOM REMARK LED TO VIRAL PARODY MOVEMENT

The CJP emerged online after remarks by Supreme Court Chief Justice Surya Kant triggered backlash among young Indians angered by unemployment, rising living costs and recent government exam paper leaks that have disrupted job recruitment drives.

During a hearing last week, Kant criticized what he described as “parasites” attacking institutions and compared some unemployed young people and activists to cockroaches.

“There are youngsters like cockroaches, who don’t get any employment or have any place in the profession,” Kant said. He said that some turned to social media activism, journalism or public interest campaigns and “start attacking everyone.”

The comments quickly spread online, where many users saw them as dismissive. Kant later clarified that his remarks referred to people obtaining fraudulent degrees and said that he didn’t intend to insult India’s youth.

But the controversy soon led to the creation of the parody CJP account on Instagram, which adopted the cockroach as its political symbol and began posting memes, mock campaign slogans and satirical commentary targeting Modi’s government.

Within days, it drew tens of thousands of online volunteers through a Google form submission, alongside endorsements from some opposition leaders.

“We have to understand that five years ago nobody was ready to speak up against Modi or the government. The times are changing,” said Dipke, who has previously worked with the Aam Aadmi Party, which emerged from India’s anti-corruption movement in 2012.

Dipke said that the CPJ isn’t affiliated with any real political organization. But its rise echoes a broader trend across South Asia, where youths have played a central role in anti-government movements in recent years, including uprisings in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and unrest in Nepal.

Alberta plans a vote on seeking independence

Carney vows a better Canada

BY ROB GILLIES
ASSOCIATED PRESS

TORONTO — Prime Minister Mark Carney said Friday he’s determined to build a better Canada after the leader of the country’s oil-rich province of Alberta announced a public vote on whether to move toward independence.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith said Thursday a vote would be held Oct. 19 on whether Alberta should stay in Canada or take legal steps under the Constitution to hold a binding referendum on leaving. That fell short of the wishes of activists who have been seeking an immediate referendum on separating from Canada.

Carney, in his first remarks since Smith’s announcement, said Albertans have made huge contributions to Canada.

“Canada is the greatest country in the world, but it can be better and we are working on making it better. We’re working with Alberta on making it better,” Carney said while touring the Parliament buildings which are under renovation.

Carney noted his government is working on getting a new oil pipeline built from Alberta to Canada’s Pacific coast. Many Albertans have long complained that Ottawa hasn’t done enough to get Alberta’s vast oil reserves to Asian markets.

Smith reiterated Friday that she supports Alberta remaining in Canada. Some have compared her stance to the one of Brit-

ain’s then-Prime Minister David Cameron ahead of the Brexit referendum, which he embraced as a way to manage a vocal faction of his ruling party while not wanting the U.K. to leave the European Union.

“I believe Canada is working better everyday and that it can work even better in the future,” Smith said.

“I have seen enough from the directional change that we have with the new prime minister who is prepared to work with us. He is prepared to give Albertans hope again.”

A “yes” vote in a referendum would not trigger independence. Negotiations with the federal government would have to take place.

Ian Brodie, a former chief of staff to ex-Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper and now a political science professor at the University of Calgary, said Smith appears to be proceeding very carefully.

“A vote to see if people even want a vote. It’s a good way to let the swing voters swing against separation,” Brodie said.

Jeff Rath, the lawyer for Stay Free Alberta, the group that collected signatures to try to force a separation referendum, called the move an insult to those seeking independence. Cam Davies, leader of the pro-independence Republican Party of Alberta, agreed and called Smith’s referendum question “spineless.” Smith said separat-

ists who are upset that a binding vote on quitting Canada has been put off should focus on the fall referendum rather than campaigning to force a review of her job.

Smith said calling a binding referendum this fall just isn’t feasible. Last week, a judge threw out the Stay Free Alberta petition, and Smith promised an appeal.

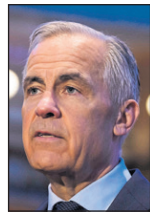
“With the recent court ruling there is no legal way to hold a binding separation referendum,” Smith said. “It would have been struck down in a matter of weeks.”

Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal, said a possible future referendum is likely to lose as support for separation is slightly less than 30%, but he said campaigns do matter.

Béland noted Smith’s party didn’t run on or mention a referendum in the last provincial election campaign.

Candace Laing, president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, criticized Smith’s decision, saying businesses across Canada, including in Alberta, need predictability to invest, particularly when there is an ongoing trade war with the United States.

“Prolonged uncertainty around constitutional or political separation brings real risks for investor confidence, economic growth, and Canada’s global competitiveness at exactly the wrong time,” Laing said in a statement.



Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney

SPORTS

FRENCH OPEN 2026 GUIDE

How to watch on TV, betting odds and more to know about Roland-Garros

BY SAMUEL PETREQUIN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS — The French Open begins in Paris on Sunday. This guide tells you what you need to know about how to watch the second tennis Grand Slam of 2026 on TV, what the betting odds are, what the schedule is, who the reigning champions are and more:

WHEN DOES IT START?
Play begins Sunday at 11 a.m. local time (0900 GMT, 0500 EDT).

WHERE CAN I WATCH IT ON TV?
— In the U.S.: TNT, TruTV, HBO Max.
— Other countries are listed here.

WHO ARE THE REIGNING CHAMPIONS?
Coco Gauff of the United States and Carlos Alcaraz of Spain.

Gauff won the trophy for the first time by defeating top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka 6-7 (5), 6-2, 6-4. Alcaraz rallied from two sets down and saved three match points to beat top-ranked Jannik Sinner 4-6, 6-7 (4), 6-4, 7-6 (10-2) for his fifth major title in as many finals. It was Alcaraz's second straight French Open title. Alcaraz injured his right wrist this season and has withdrawn from the French Open and Wimbledon.

WHO ARE THE TOP SEEDS?
Sabalenka is the women's, and Sinner is the men's. They are ranked



A ballgirl stands during the draw for the French Open tennis tournament on Thursday at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris.

No. 1 and the tournament seedings follow the WTA and ATP rankings.

WHO ARE THE BETTING FAVORITES?
Four-time Roland Garros champion Iga Swiatek is listed by bookmakers as the money-line favorite in the women's singles. She is at +225 ahead of Sabalenka (+275). In the men's draw, in the absence of the injured Alcaraz, Sinner is the overwhelming favorite at -300, ahead of Alexander Zverev at +750.

WHAT IS THE SINGLES SCHEDULE?
— Sunday through Tuesday: First Round (Women and Men)
— Wednesday-Thursday: Second Round (Women and Men)
— May 29-30: Third Round (Women and

Men)
— May 31-June 1: Fourth Round (Women and Men)
— June 2-3: Quarterfinals (Women and Men)
— June 4: Women's Semifinals
— June 5: Men's Semifinals
— June 6: Women's Final
— June 7: Men's Final

KEY STORIES BEFORE PLAY BEGINS
— Jannik Sinner enters the French Open on a 29-match win streak, chasing a career Grand Slam
— Coco Gauff has a new mindset for title defense and more confidence on her serve
— Sinner opens French Open against wild card
— Elina Svitolina and Marta Kostyuk raise trophies for war-torn Ukraine on the tennis

court
— No. 1 Sabalenka calls for boycott if players don't get bigger cut of Grand Slam revenues
— French Open players plan media protest over prize money share
— Carlos Alcaraz pulls out of Wimbledon because of wrist injury
— 45-year-old Venus Williams to play in French Open women's doubles with Hailey Baptiste

WHAT'S NEW THIS YEAR?
— Three-star gastronomy is coming to Roland Garros. Organizers are launching The Jardin des Chefs, a new dining area showcasing the best of French cuisine. Some of France's top chefs and pastry chefs will take turns preparing their signature dishes, along with exclusive

creations.
— Electronic devices that record players' biometric data have been authorized on a trial basis for the first time. The initiative is designed to help players gain insights into their physical performance and recovery throughout the tournament, organizers said. Athletes will be allowed to use any device included on the "Player Analysis Technology" list approved by the International Tennis Federation. The trial will begin at Roland Garros and continue at the other Grand Slam tournaments this year.

WHAT IS THE PRIZE MONEY?
Top players have expressed "their deep disappointment" at the French Open prize money. Open organizers

announced an overall prize money increase by about 10% for an overall pot of 61.7 million euros (\$72.1 million). The total amount is up 5.3 million euros from last year. But the players said their share of Roland Garros revenue has declined from 15.5% in 2024 to 14.9% projected in 2026. The Australian Open this year increased the players' pay by 16%, and the U.S. Open last year went up by 20%.

IS IT THE FRENCH OPEN OR ROLAND-GARROS?
Both, as you can read about in this AP story from 2019. English speakers tend to use "French Open," although the French Tennis Federation doesn't call it that. The French — and much of the rest of the world — go with "Roland Garros," which is the facility that hosts the tournament and is named after a World War I fighter pilot.

BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE CLAY-COURT MAJOR
The French Open is played outdoors on red clay courts at Roland-Garros on the southwest outskirts of Paris. Women play best-of-three-set matches with a first-to-10 tiebreaker at 6-all in the third; men play best of five with a tiebreaker at 6-all in the fifth. There are separate day and night sessions most days. The event lasts 15 days. There is a retractable roof on the main stadium, Court Philippe-Chatrier.

CEO of NIL enforcement reminds frustrated schools: These are your rules, we just enforce them

BY EDDIE PELLIS
AP NATIONAL WRITER

RANCHO PALOS VERDES, Calif. — While frustration mounts across college sports and talk of break-away conferences hits the hallways at conference's spring meetings, the leader of the agency formed to police name, image and likeness payments has a simple reminder: These are the rules you wrote.

In an interview with The Associated Press this week at the Big Ten meetings, Bryan Seeley, the CEO of the 11-month-old College Sports Commission, said he has actually heard more good feedback than bad as he's started making the rounds at league meetings.

The problem is that the bad stuff mostly revolves around issues that could break everything apart — notably, the third-party NIL deals that have blown budgets sky high and become the fulcrum of the frustration for schools trying to figure out how to survive in an era where they pay players.

"I was hired to launch the CSC and enforce the rules as written," Seeley said. "It is totally fine with us if the rules end up changing if there is consensus to change those rules. But until that happens, we're going to enforce the rules as written and



The Big Ten logo is seen on the field at Husky Stadium during an NCAA college football game on Oct. 25, 2025, in Seattle.

that's what we were told to do."

SOME ATHLETIC DIRECTORS SEE AN 'UNSUSTAINABLE' MODEL
Michigan State athletic director J. Batt summed up the feelings of some administrators in California this week when he called the college system as it currently stands "unsustainable."

"We've got to evolve the system," Batt said. "That (has) potential for a lot of different tracks. Primarily, evolving the CSC to meet what has become an evolving landscape is important. The current state isn't working."

Batt's comments came less than 24 hours after Ohio State AD Ross Bjork openly wondered to cbssports.com about the Big Ten potentially breaking away from the pack and writing its own rules. Washington

AD Pat Chun told the website "we created this fraudulent market to be able to compensate our athletes."

The comments came in the same week that saw hopes scuttled again for federal legislation to resolve some of these problems.

The Congressional Black Caucus and NAACP leveraged the recent Supreme Court ruling that paved the way for Southern states to redraw Black-majority districts into a call for Southern sports leaders, especially in the SEC and ACC, to speak up. House Minority leader Hakeem Jeffries said: "If the SEC schools are for it, we are against it."

COMMISSION GETS A WIN IN ARBITRATION THAT DOESN'T SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS
Seeley flew to California a week after from

what the CSC would term a win. In the first challenge to the CSC rejecting an NIL deal — one involving contracts for Nebraska football players — an arbitrator ruled in favor of the commission.

Seeley said "a lot of foundational issues were addressed in that one." Namely, the arbitrator ruled that a multimedia rights group — in Nebraska's case, Playfly — could be deemed an "associated entity," which is key because the CSC is asked to evaluate all NIL deals that come via associated entities. Attorneys for athletes in the \$2.8 billion House settlement responded by asking the judge now overseeing the landmark case to clarify whether the CSC is properly classifying their parties like Playfly as "associated entities."

The arbitrator also dinged Nebraska and Playfly for "warehousing" the players' NIL rights — essentially securing them for a purpose to be named later instead of having an actual deal to use them right away.

Seeley said potentially a more serious problem is schools making guarantees about third-party NIL payments to players while recruiting them from the transfer portal, which is not allowed under NCAA rules. Deals aren't supposed to be signed until after the athletes are enrolled.

The school announced Hart's promotion on Friday, a day after Avent announced his retirement after 30 seasons.



North Carolina State coach Elliott Avent, center, is flanked by players including Brett Austin (11) during NCAA college baseball practice in Omaha, Neb. on June 14, 2013.

NC State promotes Hart to replace retiring baseball coach Avent

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
RALEIGH, N.C. — N.C. State has promoted Chris Hart to replace baseball coach Elliott Avent, who is retiring at the end of the season.

The school announced Hart's promotion on Friday, a day after Avent announced his retirement after 30 seasons.

Hart has been on N.C. State's staff for 22 years, the past 11 as associate head coach. He has also served as the Wolfpack's hitting coach and recruiting coordinator while being involved in all facets of the program.

Hart was named Baseball America's national assistant coach of the year in 2021.

Avent led the Wolfpack to 22 NCAA regionals, six super regionals and CWS appearances in 2013, 2021 and 2024. N.C. State lost to Duke in the ACC Tournament this week and is hoping to receive an at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament when the field is announced on Monday.

SCOREBOARD

ODDS				
SPORTS BETTING LINE				
NBA				
FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG	
at CLEVEL.	2½ (213½)		New York	
MLB				
SATURDAY				
AMERICAN LEAGUE				
FAVORITE	LINE	UNDERDOG	LINE	
at N.Y. YANKEES	-142	Tampa Bay	+119	
Detroit	-119	at BALT.	-101	
Seattle	-144	at KAN. CITY	+119	
Minnesota	OFF	at BOSTON	OFF	
Texas	-136	at LA ANGELS	+114	
NATIONAL LEAGUE				
FAVORITE	LINE	UNDERDOG	LINE	
ST. LOUIS	-116	at CINC.	-103	
at ATLANTA	-193	Washington	+160	
N.Y. Mets	-114	at MIAMI	-106	
ST. LOUIS	-111	at CINC.	-108	
LA Dodgers	-125	at MILWAUK.	+105	
at ARIZONA	-177	Colorado	+147	
INTERLEAGUE				
FAVORITE	LINE	UNDERDOG	LINE	
at CHIC. CUBS	-152	Houston	+120	
Pittsburgh	-144	at TORONTO	+128	
White Sox	-117	at SAN FRAN.	-102	
at PHILA.	-202	Cleveland	+166	
Athletics	-110	at SAN DIEGO	-109	
NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE (NHL)				
FAVORITE	LINE	UNDERDOG	LINE	
at CAROLINA	-212	Montreal	+176	
Consensus odds provided by Sportradar				

SPORTS ON TV

(ALL TIMES CENTRAL)
SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO
CHANGE AND/OR BLACKOUTS
SATURDAY, MAY 23
AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL (MEN'S)

4:30 A.M.
FS2 — AFL: Carlton at Port Adelaide
3:30 P.M.
FS2 — AFL: Brisbane at Greater Western Sydney

AUTO RACING
1 A.M.
APPLE TV — Formula 1: Sprint Race, Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, Montreal
12:30 P.M.
PRIME VIDEO — NASCAR Cup Series: Practice, Charlotte Motor Speedway, Concord, N.C.

1:40 P.M.
PRIME VIDEO — NASCAR Cup Series: Qualifying, Charlotte Motor Speedway, Concord, N.C.

3 P.M.
APPLE TV — Formula 1: Qualifying, Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, Montreal
3:30 P.M.

CBSNN — IHRA: Triple Crown, Maple Grove Raceway, Mohnton, Pa.
4 P.M.

CW — NASCAR Auto Parts Series: Charbroil 300, Charlotte Motor Speedway, Concord, N.C.

BASKETBALL AFRICA LEAGUE
11 A.M.
NBATV — Al Ahly Ly at Club Africain
11 A.M.

NBATV — DAR City at Petro de Luanda
CHL HOCKEY
3 P.M.

NHLN — 2026 Memorial Cup: Everett vs. Chicoutimi, Round Robin, Kelowna, Canada
COLLEGE BASEBALL
NOON

ACCN — Atlantic Coast Tournament: TBD, Semifinal, Charlotte, N.C.
SECN — Southeastern Tournament: TBD, Semifinal, Hoover, Ala.
2 P.M.

BTN — Big Ten Tournament: TBD, Semifinal, Omaha, Neb.
3 P.M.

ESPNU — West Coast Tournament: TBD, Championship, Scottsdale, Ariz.
3:30 P.M.

SECN — Southeastern Tournament: TBD, Semifinal, Hoover, Ala.
4 P.M.

ACCN — Atlantic Coast Tournament: TBD, Semifinal, Charlotte, N.C.
6 P.M.

BTN — Big Ten Tournament: TBD, Semifinal, Omaha, Neb.
6:30 P.M.

ESPN2 — Big 12 Tournament: TBD, Championship, Surprise, Ariz.
ESPNU — Southern Tournament: TBD, Championship, Greenville, S.C.
COLLEGE LACROSSE (MEN'S)
11 A.M.

ESPN2 — NCAA Tournament: Duke vs. Princeton, Semifinal, Charlottesville, Va.
1:30 P.M.

ESPN2 — NCAA Tournament: Syracuse vs. Notre Dame, Semifinal, Charlottesville, Va.
COLLEGE BASKETBALL
10 A.M.

ESPN — Women's College World Series: Georgia at Tennessee, Super Regional — Game 3 (if necessary)
11:30 A.M.

ABC — Women's College World Series: Florida vs. Texas Tech, Super Regional — Game 2, Gainesville, Fla.
NOON

ESPN — Women's College World Series: Oklahoma vs. Mississippi St., Super Regional — Game 2
2 P.M.

ESPN — Women's College World Series: Alabama vs. LSU, Super Regional — Game 2, Tuscaloosa, Ala.
4 P.M.

ESPN — Women's College World Series: Oklahoma St. at Nebraska, Super Regional — Game 3 (if necessary)
ESPN2 — Women's College World Series: Arkansas vs. Duke, Super Regional — Game 2, Fayetteville, Ark.
6 P.M.

ESPN — Women's College World Series: Texas vs. Arizona St., Super Regional — Game 2, Austin Texas
8 P.M.

ESPN — Women's College World Series: UCLA vs. UCF, Super Regional — Game 2, Los Angeles
CYCLING
5 A.M.

TRUTV — UCI: Giro d'Italia, Stage 14
GOLF
8 A.M.

GOLF — PGA Tour Champions: Trophy Hassan II, Final Round, Royal Golf Dar Es Salam, Rabat, Morocco
NOON

GOLF — PGA Tour: The CJ Cup Byron Nelson, Third Round, TPC Craig Ranch, McKinney, Texas
2 P.M.

CBS — PGA Tour: The CJ Cup Byron Nelson, Third Round, TPC Craig Ranch, McKinney, Texas
GOLF — DP World Tour: Soudal Open, Third Round, Rinkwin International GC, Antwerp, Belgium (tape)

HORSE RACING
11:30 A.M.
FS1 — NYRA: America's Day at the Races
5 P.M.

FS2 — NYRA: America's Day at the Races
IHIF HOCKEY (MEN'S)
5 A.M.

NHLN — 2026 IHF World Championship Group Stage: U.S. vs. U.S., Group A, Zürich, Switzerland
9 A.M.

NHLN — 2026 IHF World Championship Group Stage: Slovenia vs. Czechia, Group B, Fribourg, Switzerland
1 P.M.

NHLN — 2026 IHF World Championship Group Stage: Norway vs. Sweden, Group B, Fribourg, SWITZERLAND
3 P.M.

FS1 — Seattle at Kansas City (4:10 p.m.)
FOX — Regional Coverage: L.A. Dodgers at Milwaukee (7:15 p.m.) OR St. Louis at Cincinnati (7:15 p.m.)
9 P.M.

MLBN — Regional Coverage: Texas at L.A. Angels (10:05 p.m.) OR Colorado at Arizona (10:10 p.m.)
NBA BASKETBALL
7 P.M.

ABC — Eastern Conference Final: New York at Cleveland, Game 3
NHL HOCKEY
6 P.M.

TNT — Western Conference Final: Montreal at Carolina, Game 2
TRUTV — Western Conference Final: Montreal at Carolina, Game 2
RUGBY (MEN'S)
1 A.M. (SUNDAY)

FS2 — NRL: South Sydney at North Queensland
SOCCER (MEN'S)
ESPNU — German Cup: Bayern Munich vs. VfB Stuttgart, Final, Berlin
1:30 P.M.

FOX — MLS: Austin at St. Louis
CBSNN — USL Championship: Brooklyn at Rhode Island
SOCCER (WOMEN'S)
CBSNN — UEFA Champions League: Barcelona vs. Lyonnes, Oslo, Norway
3 P.M.

ION — NWSL: North Carolina at Louisville
5:30 P.M.

ION — NWSL: Denver at Utah
7:45 P.M.

ION — NWSL: Angel City at Houston
CBSNN — CONCACAF Champions League: Club America vs. Washington, Final, Pachuca, Mexico
SWIMMING
3:30 P.M.

NBC — TYR: Pro Swim Series, Sacramento, Calif.
TENNIS
7 P.M.

TENNIS CHANNEL — Hamburg-ATP, Geneva-ATP, Strasbourg-WTA, & Rabat-WTA Finals
4 A.M. (SUNDAY)

TENNIS CHANNEL — Roland Garros - Live: Men's & Women's 1st Round
5 A.M. (SUNDAY)

TENNIS CHANNEL — Roland Garros - Live: Men's & Women's 1st Round
TNT — ATP/WTA: French Open, First Round, Paris
TRUTV — ATP/WTA: French Open, First Round, Paris
UFL FOOTBALL
2 P.M.

ABC — Birmingham at Columbus
WNBA BASKETBALL
7 P.M.
CBS — Minnesota at Chicago
7 P.M.
CBS — Los Angeles at Las Vegas

PRO BASKETBALL

NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION				
PLAYOFF GLANCE				
FIRST ROUND				
(BEST-OF-7; X-IF NECESSARY)				
SATURDAY, APRIL 18				
Cleveland 126, Toronto 113				
Denver 116, Minnesota 105				
New York 113, Atlanta 102				
L.A. Lakers 107, Houston 98				
SUNDAY, APRIL 19				
Boston 123, Philadelphia 91				
Oklahoma City 119, Phoenix 84				
Orlando 112, Detroit 101				
San Antonio 111, Portland 98				
MONDAY, APRIL 20				
Cleveland 115, Toronto 105				
Atlanta 107, New York 106				
Minnesota 119, Denver 114				
TUESDAY, APRIL 21				
Philadelphia 111, Boston 97				
Portland 106, San Antonio 103				
L.A. Lakers 101, Houston 94				
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22				
Detroit 98, Orlando 83				
Oklahoma City 120, Phoenix 107				
THURSDAY, APRIL 23				
Atlanta 109, New York 108				
Toronto 126, Cleveland 104				
Minnesota 113, Denver 96				
FRIDAY, APRIL 24				
Boston 108, Philadelphia 100				
L.A. Lakers 112, Houston 108, OT				
San Antonio 120, Portland 108				
SATURDAY, APRIL 25				
Orlando 103, Detroit 105				
Oklahoma City 121, Phoenix 109				
New York 114, Atlanta 98				
Minnesota 112, Denver 96				
SUNDAY, APRIL 26				
Toronto 93, Cleveland 89				
San Antonio 114, Portland 93				
Boston 128, Philadelphia 96				
Houston 115, L.A. Lakers 96				
MONDAY, APRIL 27				
Orlando 94, Detroit 98				
Oklahoma City 131, Phoenix 122, Oklahoma City wins series 4 — 1				
Denver 125, Minnesota 113				
TUESDAY, APRIL 28				
Philadelphia 113, Boston 97				
New York 126, Atlanta 97				
San Antonio 114, Portland 95, San Antonio wins series 4 — 1				
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29				
Detroit 116, Orlando 109				
Cleveland 125, Toronto 120				
Houston 95, L.A. Lakers 93				
THURSDAY, APRIL 30				
New York 140, Atlanta 89, New York wins series 4 — 2				
Philadelphia 106, Boston 93				
Minnesota 110, Denver 98, Minnesota wins series 4				
FRIDAY, MAY 1				
Detroit 93, Orlando 79				
Toronto 112, Cleveland 110, OT				
L.A. Lakers 98, Houston 78, L.A. Lakers wins series 4 — 2				
SATURDAY, MAY 2				
Philadelphia 109, Boston 100, Philadelphia wins series 4				
SUNDAY, MAY 3				
Detroit 116, Orlando 94, Detroit wins series 4 — 3				
CONFERENCE FINALS				
(BEST-OF-7, X-IF NECESSARY)				
MONDAY, MAY 18				
San Antonio 122, Oklahoma City 115, 2OT				
TUESDAY, MAY 19				
New York 115, Cleveland 104, OT				
WEDNESDAY, MAY 20				
Oklahoma City 122, San Antonio 113				
THURSDAY, MAY 21				
New York 109, Cleveland 93, New York leads series 2 — 0				
FRIDAY, MAY 22				
Oklahoma City 123, San Antonio 108, Oklahoma City leads series 2 — 1				
SATURDAY, MAY 23				
New York at Cleveland, 7 p.m.				
SUNDAY, MAY 24				
Oklahoma City at San Antonio, 7 p.m.				
MONDAY, MAY 25				
New York at Cleveland, 7 p.m.				
TUESDAY, MAY 26				
San Antonio at Oklahoma City, 7:30 p.m.				
WEDNESDAY, MAY 27				
x-Cleveland at New York, TBA				
THURSDAY, MAY 28				
x-Oklahoma City at San Antonio, TBA				
FRIDAY, MAY 29				
x-New York at Cleveland, TBA				
SATURDAY, MAY 30				
x-San Antonio at Oklahoma City, TBA				
SUNDAY, MAY 31				
x-Cleveland at New York, TBA				
(BEST-OF-7, X-IF NECESSARY)				
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3				
FRIDAY, JUNE 5				
MONDAY, JUNE 8				
TUESDAY, JUNE 9				
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10				
THURSDAY, JUNE 11				
FRIDAY, JUNE 12				
SATURDAY, JUNE 13				
SUNDAY, JUNE 14				
MONDAY, JUNE 15				
TUESDAY, JUNE 16				
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17				
THURSDAY, JUNE 18				
FRIDAY, JUNE 19				
SATURDAY, JUNE 20				
SUNDAY, JUNE 21				
MONDAY, JUNE 22				
TUESDAY, JUNE 23				
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24				
THURSDAY, JUNE 25				
FRIDAY, JUNE 26				
<				

FINANCE



Stuart Miles / Dreamstime / TNS

A HELOC is a way to tap into your home's equity – the portion of your home you own outright. Like a credit card, a HELOC lets you borrow from a credit line gradually, as the need arises, up to a specified dollar limit. You can then pay the money back in installments.

How to shop for a HELOC

10 ways to get the best HELOC rate

By **LINDA BELL**

Bankrate.com (TNS)

If you're considering borrowing against your home with a home equity line of credit (HELOC), shopping around for one beforehand is crucial – both for the most competitive interest rate and for other favorable terms and conditions, too.

HELOCs come with several expenses and conditions that impact the cost of the loan over its lifetime: prepayment penalties, the length of the draw period, minimum draw amounts, interest-only payments, and annual and "lock-in rate" fees. You'll likely need a strong credit score as well, but lenders will also consider your debt-to-income ratio and your overall financial profile.

Here we'll explore how to shop for a HELOC and provide 10 tips to get you started.

What is a HELOC?

A HELOC is a way to tap into your home's equity – the portion of your home you own outright. Like a credit card, a HELOC lets you borrow from a credit line gradually, as the need arises, up to a specified dollar limit. You can then pay the money back in installments.

10 tips to get the best HELOC rate

1. Maintain good credit

TAKEAWAY: Having a higher credit score will help you get lower rates, so do what you can to raise yours before you apply.

Having a good credit score is one of the key ways to obtain a competitive interest rate when applying for a HELOC. It's the main thing the lender will consider when deciding how much to charge you.

A credit score of 700 or above will most likely qualify you for the best interest rates, though homeowners with scores as low as 620 might still get approved.

"It's all part of the riskiness factor for the lender, if they're gonna lend to you or not," says Sacha Rady, Realtor and real estate advisor at Compass in Atlanta. "They want to make sure they get paid back. The lower the credit score, the higher the interest rate you're going to have." Your credit score will also determine which loan products you might qualify for.

To help improve your credit score when applying for a HELOC, consider these steps:

- Check your credit report and dispute any errors

- Keep your credit card balances low
- Make all credit payments on time
- Hold off on acquiring new debts or credit cards shortly before you apply (your score declines when you open an account)

2. Calculate your equity

TAKEAWAY: You'll likely find lower HELOC rates if you have substantial equity built up in your home.

The amount of equity (outright ownership stake) you have in your home determines the size of your home equity line of credit, and it influences the HELOC rate you're able to get. The more equity you have, the better you look to a lender and the less likely that you're over-loaded with debt against your home.

Having a decent amount of equity also means that you'll have a lower combined loan-to-value ratio, or CLTV. The CLTV is determined by adding up your current loan balance and your desired line of credit and then dividing by the appraised value of your home.

For HELOCs, lenders typically prefer CLTVs below 85 percent. Plus, a lower CLTV often translates to a lower interest rate.

To get an idea of how much home equity you have, find an online estimate of the value of your home and subtract the balance owed on your mortgage. Here's an example:

- \$325,000 (home value) – \$215,000 = \$110,000 (amount of equity in dollars)

- \$110,000 / \$325,000 (home value) = 0.338 (33.8 percent equity)

3. Consider different types of lenders

TAKEAWAY: Your own bank or credit union is a great place to start looking for a HELOC, but it's always best to compare rates from at least a few other lenders to make sure you're getting the most competitive terms.

While your current lender may offer you a good deal on a HELOC, don't stop there. Compare estimates from other players, including:

- National banks
- Smaller community banks
- Credit unions
- Online lenders

Each type of lender has its own advantages. For instance, online lenders generally have lower operating costs, which can allow them to offer you lower interest rates, while local banks and credit unions may have a better understanding of your local market and offer you more personalized service or fewer fees – especially if you already do business at that institution.

To get the best HELOC rate, try to get at least three quotes when considering your options.

4. Understand introductory rates

TAKEAWAY: Know how and when your HELOC interest rate might change during the draw and repayment periods.

When you think you've found a great HELOC rate, find out how long it will last and how it might change over time. A HELOC typically comes with an adjustable rate during the draw period that fluctuates in sync with the prime rate or other benchmark index. However, some lenders may offer you a fixed rate for an initial, temporary period, sometimes called a teaser rate.

"Some lenders offer very attractive introductory rates for the first six to 12 months only to increase it meaningfully after that period," says Vikram Gupta, head of home lending strategic partnerships at Wells Fargo.

Find out how long your introductory rate will last and what your rate will be after that period ends – especially if you're planning to withdraw funds over several years. A lower rate during a year-long introductory period may not be worth it if your rate skyrockets after.

5. Look for rate caps

TAKEAWAY: A low rate cap protects you against a market of rising interest rates.

The interest rates on HELOCs are based on a benchmark rate or index, like the prime rate, plus an additional percentage, or margin, your lender puts on. They are usually variable, fluctuating with their benchmark.

However, there is a limit: Most HELOCs offer rate caps as a safeguard against rising interest rates. If you select a HELOC with a low rate cap, you're protected from paying more than that maximum, even if the prime rate spikes. If there is no cap, you run the risk of your interest rate pushing your monthly payment beyond what you can afford.

6. Factor in fees

TAKEAWAY: When comparing lenders, be sure to consider any relevant fees, as well as the interest rate, in order to get a true picture of the total cost of the loan. Even with fees, some loans may still end up having a lower overall cost.

While obtaining a low interest rate is important, the fees associated with a HELOC also play a big factor in your final cost.

Typical fees include:

- Origination fee: An amount that the lender charges for processing and approving your HELOC application.

- Third-party fee: A fee charged by an outside servicer for work done pertaining to your loan, like an appraiser, legal counsel or individuals doing a title search.

- Annual fee: A yearly expense charged by your lender to keep your account open for the duration of the loan.

- Inactivity fee: A fee levied by the lender if you do not draw on the account for a specified (by the lender) period.

- Early closure fee/prepayment penalty: Expense charged if you pay off your HELOC early and close your account—usually within the first few years.

- Lock-in fee: This is a fee to fix the interest rate on all or part of your HELOC balance (more on this in tip number nine) during the draw period.

Get documentation for each quote you receive, including the associated interest and all rate fees so you can compare your options side by side. It's important to evaluate the total, long-term cost of each loan offer. And don't be afraid to negotiate.

7. Watch out for balloon payments

TAKEAWAY: A low rate may not be worth it if the trade-off is a huge balloon payment at the end of your term.

Getting a low monthly rate may seem like the most important factor when choosing a HELOC, but sometimes those low rates come at the expense of a balloon payment. A balloon payment requires you to pay off your remaining balance in a lump sum at the end of your term – a potentially huge payment if you're not prepared for it.

If you are unable to make the balloon payment for some reason, you may be forced to refinance the loan or even sell your property entirely in order to cover the payment. The good news is that HELOCs with end-of-term balloon payments are less common in today's market, but think twice before agreeing to these terms.

8. Choose shorter draw and repayment periods

TAKEAWAY: Shorter draw periods and repayment periods pose less risk to the lender, so you may be offered lower interest rates if you have the option to choose shorter terms.

Many lenders have only one set of HELOC terms, but some lenders may let you choose the length of your draw period and the repayment period. Opting for a shorter repayment term can decrease the amount of interest you pay.

In addition, you may score a better interest rate if you select a shorter repayment timeline. Check with different lenders to see if changing the length of the draw or repayment periods is a possibility.

9. Look for fixed-rate options

TAKEAWAY: If interest rates are low, fixed-

rate options during the draw period could be a selling point. Even if the lock comes with a fee, it may be worth it to avoid future rising rates.

More and more lenders are offering the option to convert some or all of your HELOC balance into a fixed-rate loan for a set period of time, sometimes without a fee. This is a good option if you want to lock in the interest rate without worrying about potential fluctuations in the market. Doing so may allow you to pay less out-of-pocket during the loan's lifetime, too.

If you feel interest rates are going to rise before you have the ability to pay off the HELOC, then obtaining a fixed rate can provide some comfort and security. However, a longer period with a fixed interest rate could mean a higher interest rate. And the strategy could backfire if interest rates start dramatically declining.

10. Take advantage of discounts

TAKEAWAY: Autopay or member discounts are possible ways to lower the APR on your HELOC, so look for ways to save wherever you can.

If you have an existing relationship with a bank or credit union, you may qualify for member discounts on your HELOC rate. Many lenders also offer rate discounts for setting up automatic payments.

"Some lenders offer what I call bundled pricing," says Jean Chalifoux Kiely, executive vice president and director of consumer banking at Sunrise Banks, based in St. Paul, Minn. "The deeper the relationship, the deeper the discount."

You should still talk to multiple lenders, though, as the best deal isn't always with a bank you already have a relationship with.

Bottom line on getting the best HELOC rate

A HELOC can be a useful way to cover large or unexpected expenses. In many cases, HELOCs are a better bet than credit cards, personal loans and even home equity loans. But in the current economic environment, it's more important than ever to do your due diligence before choosing a lender.

As you investigate, remember that there are steps you can take to reduce the amount of interest you pay over the life of the loan.

Frequently asked questions

- How fast can you get funding from a HELOC? HELOC funds are generally available four business days after the closing (there's a mandatory three-day waiting period, to give the borrower time to cancel). Getting approved for a HELOC, however, can take up to a month – the application process is similar to that of a mortgage. Even so, some lenders, especially online ones, promise decisions and funding in as little as three or five days.

- Is it hard to get a HELOC right now? The denial rate on HELOC applications in the second quarter of 2025 was 38.29 percent, according to the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act. In other words, over a third of HELOC applicants were turned down. But back in 2020, the rate reached as high as 60 percent, suggesting it's significantly easier to get a credit line nowadays.

ENTERTAINMENT



Boots Riley hopes to shoplift your mind with the subversive comedy ‘I Love Boosters’

By MARK OLSEN
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — Boots Riley is in motion. During our recent interview, the writer-director is on the phone while traveling in a car from his home in Oakland to a hotel in San Francisco for a full day promoting his new movie “I Love Boosters.” The film had its local premiere the night before at the historic Grand Lake Theater and, rather than sounding morning-after bleary, Riley is energized, overflowing with ideas.

Riley, who, at 55, has been unapologetically calling himself a communist for more than 30 years, brings an unusual level of political commitment and consciousness to his work. “Boosters” is a rascally, freewheeling comedy touched by an absurdist sensibility, but it’s also deeply attuned to issues of workers’ rights and structures of power. Riley’s previous feature, 2018’s “Sorry to Bother You,” was about a telemarketer who uncovers a larger corporate conspiracy.

All of which is rooted in the much larger goals Riley has his eyes on. Yes, he wants his \$20-million movie — the largest production investment ever for its distributor, Neon — to make its money back, but he also wants to convey a forceful message to audiences whether they walk in expecting one or not. Can a movie in wide release across the country and backed by an Oscar-winning studio convey genuinely revolutionary thoughts?

“The world that I hope to see created is one in which the people democratically control the wealth that they create with their labor,” Riley says with a mix of calm and charisma that’s invigorating. “Now, why do I want that? That has to do with people. I like people and I think there’s a way that we can get there in order to counter those in power just doing whatever they want to do.”

Even as he veers into heady territory that could seem didactic, Riley maintains a low-key charm like a professor in his off-hours unspooling a few big ideas.

“What I’ve seen in my life is what makes people get involved in stuff is optimism. And not a disconnected fantasy — optimism that says: We can do this and then this other thing will happen. And so for me, that’s not about stale stuff, that’s about connecting to the joy of life, connecting to laughter and the beauty of other people.”

Raised largely in Oakland, Riley became involved in local activism at a young age. His work as a musician in the years before he turned to filmmaking honed his understanding of audiences and sense of showmanship.

The candy-colored “I Love Boosters”

is a movie that isn’t afraid to reset itself, evolving and reconfiguring its storytelling as it goes along. Corvette (Keke Palmer) runs a crew of thieves who steal from clothing boutiques, then resell at a significant discount. But what she really wants to be is a designer in the mold of mogul Christie Smith (Demi Moore), who oversees a fashion empire — that is until Corvette comes to understand some of the true costs of Christie’s goods, the underpaid human labor that brings it into being.

The cast includes Naomie Ackie and Taylour Paige as Corvette’s accomplices, Eiza González as a revolutionary fellow traveler, Poppy Liu as the Chinese factory worker who opens Corvette’s eyes to what’s really going on and LaKeith Stanfield as an enigmatic stranger who may open her up to much more.

This description of the film does not even begin to include some of its more outrageous features: a teleportation device powered by Marxist dialectics, villains conveyed in stop-motion animation, a thrilling car chase done with miniatures and Don Cheadle in prosthetics that render him practically unrecognizable.

“I Love Boosters” is also the title of a song on the 2006 album “Pick a Bigger Weapon” by Riley’s long-running rap group the Coup, including such lines as “Most of it was made by children in Asia / The stores make money off of very low wages.” He says the movie isn’t a direct adaptation of the song. Rather they are drawn from the same motivations and inspirations.

Since the film’s raucous premiere in early March at South by Southwest, Riley figures he has seen it well over 25 times with audiences, in part because he has been on a promotional tour of colleges.

“It’s always like a rock show,” Riley says. “I’ve been taking it back to the indie music days and just beating the cement.”

Everywhere he has shown the film, audiences have responded in largely the same way, often laughing so loudly they drown out lines of dialogue. To Riley, it means that his stories can travel, finding universal truth in the specific.

“I get underwhelmed by movies that basically are supposed to be any place and anywhere, but then end up being no place and nowhere,” he says. “It’s contextual to the language you speak and the food you eat and the music you listen to and all of that. I think people have to have a specific point of view and their points of view don’t have to be as radical as mine, but they have to really care about something.”

Both of Riley’s features as well as

his 2023 Prime Video streaming series “I’m a Virgo” have a strong, active visual imagination. Pushing things even further with the eye-popping look of “Boosters,” he worked with cinematographer Natasha Braier (“The Neon Demon”), costume designer Shirley Kurata (an Oscar nominee for “Everything Everywhere All at Once”) and production designer Christopher Glass (“Ms. Marvel”), to make the world of the film as inventive as possible.

“For me, I’m heightening contradictions,” Riley says of his film’s handmade aesthetic. “That’s also something I bring from music. You can talk all the time about what technically should work, but what matters is making you feel a certain thing.”

Riley is mindful that his film’s more outré moments don’t detract from the underlying emotions he is trying to convey. Also that it be fun.

“Music videos, for instance, they’re interesting to look at but they’re not often moving,” he says. “So what I have to do, my main thing that ties all this together, is humanity. And I get that through the character writing and the story, but also through the performances. I have to combine all of those things to make the visceral parts work, to connect to the character’s emotions. And even if you don’t get it consciously, you’ll just feel this movement as you go.”

Stanfield, who also starred in “Sorry to Bother You,” recalls first meeting Riley at a party at the Sundance Film Festival. “I liked the fact that he had a really big afro,” says Stanfield in a separate call from San Francisco the morning after the Bay Area premiere, “and he had mutton-chop kind of sideburns and I was like: I like this dude’s style, man. I like the fact that he’s able to just be himself.”

Stanfield’s laconic intensity is the perfect foil for Riley’s own unpredictability. The actor recalls Riley first telling him about what would become his character in “I Love Boosters” before the script was even written.

“He just said that it’s going to be a character unlike any character you played, which is true,” says Stanfield. “And that it’s someone that is trying to find a way to connect to others. And this guy has been alive since the beginning of time. And I was like, ‘Oh, this is very interesting.’ And it turned out to be all of those things.”

Riley is unusually active online, often mixing it up with fans and detractors alike on social media. Recently he got into an extended series of posts on the platform X, where he was attacked for working with producer Megan Ellison, daughter of tech billionaire Larry Ellison and sister of Paramount Sky-

Boots Riley attends the “I Love Boosters” premiere during the 2026 SXSW Conference and Festival at The Paramount Theatre on March 12 in Austin, Texas
Tibrina Hobson / Getty Images / TNS.

dance chairman David Ellison. “It’s part of how I engage with the world,” he says matter-of-factly. “Whether it’s worth my time or not, that’s a whole other thing.”

Riley acknowledges that there is rarely ethically pure money to be found in the world, so that financing for something like a feature film will likely have to come from sources unlikely to pass strict purity tests.

“So there’s no getting out of it,” he says with a sense of thought-through clarity. “And also, that’s not my goal. That never was part of my goal. My goal is to help create class struggle and help to create this mass militant, radical labor movement.”

By this time, Riley has hopped out of his car and — as signaled by the “thank yous” and “you’re welcomes” that punctuate his responses — made his way to where he will finish getting ready before his press day. None of which stops the flow of ideas.

“There’s many other reasons to decry and be against what Larry Ellison is doing,” Riley continues. “Because it’s old school, robber baron sort of s---. And I do speak out about that. But my point is, we’ve got to have some power to change the way things are and that power is only going to come from being able to have the working class stop capital when it wants.”

A deep analysis of class dynamics and labor is already unusual enough from a filmmaker. And then there are the hats. Riley has taken to wearing outsized hats for most press events for the new film, a look that is as distinctive as it can be an invitation to parody. He currently has about six in rotation in a variety of colors and gets them from the London shop Uptown Yardie, which makes them in tribute to Jamaican heritage.

As with many things in the Boots Riley universe, the hats are partly fanciful and partly practical. He started wearing them in 2022 or so and last year intended to retire them because they can be cumbersome to travel with.

And yet he discovered they had another purpose.

“I read a thing with [Jean-Luc] Godard talking about how he had to make himself this character to sell his movies,” Riley says. “And you don’t think about Godard thinking about marketing. And so for me, I was like, ‘I gotta sell this movie. Let me bring the hat back out.’”

MOVIE REVIEW



From left to right: The Mandalorian (Pedro Pascal) and Grogu in Lucasfilm’s “The Mandalorian and Grogu.”

Nicola Goode / Lucasfilm LTD / TNS

The Force is dull in this ‘The Mandalorian and Grogu’

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Not to shock anyone, but it’s important to disclose that I’ve never seen an episode of “The Mandalorian” (or any “Star Wars” show). But the breakout star of the series, “Baby Yoda,” aka “The Child,” aka Grogu, has become a ubiquitous pop cultural sensation, so it’s nearly impossible to go in completely cold to the big screen adaptation of the series, “Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu.” Still, I can report that it’s possible to go in colder than most and still maintain your footing, to alleviate any concerns of fellow casual “Star Wars” fans.

That’s because “Mandalorian and Grogu” director and co-writer Jon Favreau, and co-writers Dave Filoni and Noah Kloor, traffic in easily digestible tropes, archetypes and genre references. The story is like an old-fashioned film serial blown up to blockbuster proportions, set in a world that has dominated pop culture for almost 50 years. The remnants of a crumbling empire, a bounty hunter with a heart of gold,

‘Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu’

★★

Running time: 2 hours 12 minutes

Rated PG-13 for sci-fi violence and action.

Where to watch: In theaters

a cute green guy who wields the Force – what’s not to get?

How Mando (Pedro Pascal under the helmet) and Grogu linked up has been covered in the series, so if you’re a die-hard fan, there’s not a lot of repeat or recap. Essentially, what you need to know is that the story is set in the period between the original “Star Wars” trilogy (ending with “Return of the Jedi”) and the sequel trilogy (starting with “The Force Awakens”). The Galactic Empire has fallen, replaced with the New Republic. While former Imperial warlords drift about, trying

to amass power, the New Republic sends out the Mandalorian to haul them back to headquarters to snitch on their comrades. Reparations and justice for corrupt and evil fascists – we simply love to see it.

Favreau’s film plays like another installment in the Mando and Grogu adventures: We meet up with them mid-raid, which results in a dead target, and doesn’t please his boss, Colonel Ward (Sigourney Weaver). Still, she sends them on to their next assignment, doing some dirty work for the criminal gangster organization the Hutts. Jabba’s son Rotta (Jeremy Allen White) is missing, and his aunt and uncle would like him back. While Mando hates to work for the Hutts, they’ve promised intel on a very promising, and very elusive, Imperial leader.

When they find Rotta (weirdly buff for a Hutt) in the fighting pits of the urban enclave Shakari – thanks to information from a food vendor voiced by Martin Scorsese – Mando is surprised to find that Rotta’s not inclined to return to his family. White’s actorly presence comes through in his vocal performance, lending the beleaguered fighter a

sense of depressed world-weariness and poignant ennui.

But this plot point kicks off a narrative whirlpool in which “The Mandalorian and Grogu” finds itself trapped – Mando is knocked out cold, wakes up in an unfamiliar spot, and then has to fight a bunch of CGI beasts. This happens at least three times in the film, and it gets repetitive. The nods to Ray Harryhausen monster movies are appreciated, but it quickly loses its novelty.

The film takes its cues from those old timey epics, as well as from Westerns and samurai movies – anything with a lone fighter who lives by a code and has a desire to fiercely protect his loved ones. There’s an element of the classic Western “Shane” as Mando fights to protect his diminutive sidekick, and Pascal delivers his quips (“Fighting’s not a sport, it’s a last resort,” etc.) with John Wayne-style panache.

But with his helmet hiding his face (to take it off is shameful), and most of the characters computer-generated, our emotional touchpoint throughout remains a puppet – Grogu. With his huge eyes, baby coos and little shuffle, he’s been

engineered to elicit cute aggression from audiences and everyone he encounters, including Rotta, and various creatures who help him along the way, resulting in a wave of deus ex machina story beats where someone swoops in to save the day. Over and over, Mando finds himself in a jam but we never think he’s in any real danger, because would this kiddie-skewing “Star Wars” actually force Grogu to grapple with grief?

Ludwig Göransson’s expressive score does much of the emotional heavy lifting too. He peppers in an electronic techno theme among the sweeping orchestral stuff for a feel that’s both ‘80s retro and distinctly modern; when the film pauses for Grogu’s moment of heroism it’s quietly atmospheric and curious. The score is the single best element of filmmaking on display, because the cinematography is a desaturated CGI mish-mosh.

Grogu’s cuteness may be a powerful force, but it’s not enough to sustain this big screen leap, especially in a blockbuster this bloated, and frankly, dull. If it feels like a serial, maybe it should have stayed a series.

MOVIE REVIEW

‘I Love Boosters’ is a crazy carnival with a deeper meaning

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Stepping into the mind of Boots Riley is always a wild and radicalizing ride. The Oakland-based rapper, activist and filmmaker burst onto the Hollywood scene with his scathing, absurdist corporate satire “Sorry To Bother You” in 2018, and his sophomore feature, “I Love Boosters,” is just as wacky, colorful, and galvanizing as his first film, perhaps even more so.

Much has happened since 2018, when Riley took aim at corporate greed and conspiracy at a telemarketing firm, where a young black man uses a “white voice” in order to succeed. There’s been a pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, public sentiment turning against tech oligarchs, and Riley, who joined the Progressive Labor Party at age 15, remains laser-focused on workers, unions and solidarity. In “I Love Boosters,” he takes his message from the local to the global, demonstrating how economically interconnected we all are.

Keke Palmer stars as Corvette, the leader of a group of shoplifters that includes her friends, the pragmatic Sade (Naomi Ackie) and the dreamy Mariah (Taylour Paige). They “boost” luxury clothing and resell it on the black market, while Corvette dreams of becoming a designer herself, idolizing the brilliant-but-quirky fashion mogul Christie Smith (Demi Moore).

But “I Love Boosters” is not

‘I Love Boosters’

★★★★ ½

Running time: 1 hour 45 minutes

Rated R for strong sexual content, nudity, language throughout and brief drug use.

Where to watch: in theaters

the story of Corvette’s ascent into a traditional industry, but of her growing disillusionment with aspirational billionaire idol worship and her awakening to solidarity across borders. The fashion world is the perfect setting for Riley’s tale, both aesthetically and symbolically. The lush, over-the-top costumes by Shirley Kurata are nothing less than high art, and fit perfectly with Riley’s cartoonish, absurdist style. But clothing is also a ubiquitous human necessity in everyday life. And we’re often blind to the conditions under which it is made, as workers in overseas factories crank out merchandise under dangerous conditions.

Clothing and fashion also provide a fascinating symbol for Riley to play with shifting, socially constructed notions of value – items can be stolen, but what about ideas? Why are people (often the upper class) morally offended by the idea



Neon / TNS

“I Love Boosters,” a film written and directed by Boots Riley.

of shoplifting but not worker exploitation or the theft of intellectual property? Why are some economic markets socially acceptable and others illegal, and who decides that status anyway? Riley asks us to at least ponder these questions rather than just accepting “the way things are.”

To pull off their biggest heist yet, Corvette and her girls infiltrate the business and get jobs at one of Christie Smith’s retail outposts, where they’re managed by fussy Grayson (Will Poulter) and meet the disgruntled, radical Violeta (Eiza González), who is trying to pull together a strike. But they’re distracted by a new booster on the scene, Jianhu (Poppy Liu), who has popped out of nowhere with a strange new technology on her hands: a portable teleporter. It turns out she’s an emissary

from one of Christie’s Chinese clothing factories, where workers are becoming sick from exposure to the chemicals used for denim sandblasting. She and her cousin steal the teleporter, developed for shipping, in order to hurt Christie’s company, holding the clothes hostage, and demanding better worker treatment.

Ergo, “I Love Boosters” is Riley’s “Norma Rae.” It’s also, in a manner of speaking, his “Heat,” combining the heist movie with the union movie in his own crazy signature style. And does it ever get crazy. Like “Sorry To Bother You,” “I Love Boosters” comes dangerously close to careening all the way off the rails at times, especially when Violeta is explaining the properties of the teleporter device – which also deconstructs and accelerates situations – using the philosophy

of dialectical materialism (we can have a little Marxism, as a treat). Or, when a group of flesh-exposed bodies, relieved of their skin suits, engage Corvette in a high-speed chase around downtown after the crew disrupts Christie’s fashion show. Whatever Riley’s having, pass it around.

That’s the beauty of Riley’s work: He invites you into his wacky, exhilarating, profane, political carnival where everything has a deeper meaning. Take, for example, Corvette’s real name, Cassandra, the Greek mythological figure whose spoken prophecies are often ignored. In his surrealist modern fables, Riley employs monstrous mythological types, like Lakeith Stanfield’s seducer figure, a demon who literally sucks women dry, a distraction that Corvette has to avoid like an obstacle on her road to enlightenment.

At times, “I Love Boosters” almost loses the plot, and we almost lose a foothold in reality. But the performances are funny and charming, particularly Paige, and Palmer grounds the emotional core of Corvette’s journey. For such heavy political themes and rallying cries to action, Riley makes it wildly entertaining, with eye-popping visuals, and a circus-inspired score by Tune-Yards. What’s most important is that among all the mishaps and misadventures, his message never loses its clarity: Liberation is for everyone, and, most importantly, it should be fun.

TECHNOLOGY

GADGETS

Stay ahead of car trouble

By **GREGG ELLMAN**
Tribune News Service (TNS)

How annoying is it to get in your vehicle and your check engine light or other alerts suddenly flash in your face? The BlueDriver Pro Scan tool will tell you almost instantly what the problem is, and potentially keep you ahead of a breakdown.

This pocket-sized diagnostic tool does big things. Just plug it into your car's OBDII port to get live data and professional-grade diagnostics. It helps you identify potential maintenance issues with your vehicle. Using it is simple. You don't need advanced mechanical knowledge. The tool provides information to help you decide whether your vehicle needs your trusted mechanic.

If you're like me, you don't know about your vehicle's OBDII connector port or where to find it. Google gave me a quick answer: The OBDII connector is a standardized diagnostic port. It's mandatory in all 1996 and newer vehicles. It is under the dashboard on the driver's side. This port enables communication between a scanner and the car's electronic control unit to read diagnostics, clear codes, and provide power.

The BlueDriver Pro Scan tool has over 9,000 diagnostic codes. It sends results via Bluetooth to its companion app. The device reportedly works with up to 90 percent of cars, SUVs and light trucks sold in North America since 1996. The compatibility chart on the BlueDriver site is easy to navigate and lists makes like Ford, GM, Toyota, Honda, BMW and more.

The BlueDriver app is straightforward to read codes, view the vehicle's history, check warning lights, view recalls, vehicle information, and service bulletins. There's a whole lot more, and the app's home screen dashboard is as easy as any to navigate. Once you have the information needed, just email it to yourself so you can pass it on to your mechanic.

It works subscription-free for reports on your engine, fuel system and transmission, among others, and even provides directions for simple tasks like resetting your oil light.

And the uses aren't limited to just your own vehicle; think of plugging it into a used vehicle you might purchase, showing any current issues along with its maintenance history.

<https://us.bluedriver.com> \$89.95

Devialet, a French audio company that touts itself as driven by the unsilenceable pursuit of acoustic excellence, hit my inbox with an announcement about its Devialet Gemini II premium true wireless earbuds, now

available in two new colors: light pearl and deep forest.

The colors, along with the original three (black, gold and white), are all new to me since I've never tried or even heard of the luxury earbuds. Devialet engineered last year's launch of the Gemini IIs for 15 years and came away with big sound, full of punch and clarity for all playlists. In fact, not long ago, a reader emailed me with an interesting idea: "Why don't you listen to playlists you don't normally listen to while reviewing earbuds?" So I gave that a try with these and went for playlists of big bands, featuring music from the 1940s.

And the Gemini IIs delivered; while not making me a fan of big bands, the sound that reached my ears was more than appealing. I was hooked on the earbuds and did enjoy how the big band sounded. After testing them for the last few weeks, there's no doubt in my mind about the advanced quality of the sound coming from custom titanium-coated 10mm drivers in each ear.

Helping Devialet reach the level of excellence they strive for were advanced features such as active wind reduction, adaptive noise cancellation and multipoint pairing via Bluetooth 5.2.

Other features include clear, hands-free calls and 5 hours of playtime per charge, with a total of 22 hours with the included wireless charging/storage case. And an IPX4 water and sweat-resistant body. On-ear touch controls are all responsive and can be customized with the Gemini companion

app. The app has an equalizer to set the sound you like and audio presets.

The second generation of the Gemini earbuds is 40 percent smaller than the first and features a high-quality build. Once in your ears, they have a comfortable, ergonomic feel, which is a feature I find as critical as the sound they produce. Four ear-tip sizes (XS, S, M, L) are included.

<https://www.devialet.com/en-us/true-wireless-earbuds> \$499

One thing is for sure about portable power: It gets smaller and smaller while offering more features and more power. The Cuktech Power Bank 15 Air is a perfect example of that.

The pocket-sized portable is built with advanced GaN and silicon-carbon technology for faster, cooler and safe charging. It has intelligent power distribution, delivering up to 100 watts from a 15,000 mAh internal battery.

On the front is a smart TFT digital display that provides real-time monitoring of each port, current voltage and temperature, estimated recharge time, and other smart charging features.

It has three ports (two USB-C and one USB-A) that can all work simultaneously. Data supplied by Cuktech had it charging an iPhone 17 Pro Max about 1.7 times or a Samsung S25 Ultra approximately 2.2 times. The USB-C fast charging port provides up to 65 watts of power for charging some laptops and tablets.

A 240-watt USB-C cable is included.

<https://cuktech.com/products/cuktech-15-air-power-bank> \$79.99

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

BlueDriver Pro Scan tool.

Cuktech Power Bank 15 Air. Cuktech/TNS

Devialet / TNS
Devialet Gemini II.

Don't make a scammer's life easier

By **JIM ROSSMAN**
Tribune News Service (TNS)

This week I received a question about spam emails, "For some time, I am getting emails showing an invoice for services about to be charged to my credit card. Other than ignoring them, do you have any suggestions on how to handle these messages? I've not had any charges to a credit/debit card or withdrawal from bank accounts. So far, I've 'Blocked Contact' when I get one, but these emails are like rabbits in that they seem to multiply. I don't want to change my email address. Any thoughts?"

I've mentioned this before, but it's been a few years.

These emails usually have attachments that are fake invoices or sales orders. When you open it, you'll see it's a bill for a year of antivirus software or for a purchase of Bitcoin through PayPal.

The one thing these emails have in common is a prominent phone number for you to call if you didn't authorize the purchase and want to stop it.

Why?

Previously, you might get a phone call from a scammer, but these days most people don't answer their phones, especially from numbers they don't recognize.

These emails serve to set off an alarm in your head that something bad is about to happen and you need to act fast to stop it – so you call the number.

What the scammers have done is turn the tables. Instead of them calling number after number, hoping to find a sucker who will listen to more than five seconds of their pitch, now they can send out hundreds or thousands of fake emails and simply wait for their phone to ring.

They figure if they can fool someone into believing, and that person actually calls the number, there's a pretty good chance they're in a frantic state and can be talked out of their credit card number or other personal information.

Something like, "Yes, Mr. Smith, the invoice has already been processed, but if you can verify your card number, I can get the charges credited back to your account."

You can block them, if you have nothing better to do, but the email that shows up on the scam message will not be valid, and it will be different when you get the next scam message. Also, the phone number will probably only be active for a short period before they change it.

Just ignore them.

Mark them as spam for your email provider and move on.

What can you do?

Just like those spam phone calls, the best course of action is to not acknowledge them at all.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossman.techadviser@gmail.com.

Thank You For Your Order!

Bill Receipt No: AS-857472-156197537

Invoice No: RCPT-20260402-XEM-680315

Date: 2026-APR-02, Thursday, 07:25:15

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for using PayPal. Your account has been charged with USD \$351.24 and will be going to deduct from your account within 24 hours. If you didn't recognize this transaction or want to cancel these charges, please contact Toll Free

Customer Support: +1 (804) [REDACTED]

Transaction Details:

Product	: Coinbase BTC
Total Amount	: \$351.24
Payment method	: Online
Payment Status	: Processing

[Help | Security Center](#)

If you have any questions or need assistance, please call Customer Support at +1 (804) [REDACTED]

Best Regards,
Billing Support Team

Jim Rossman / TNS

These emails usually have attachments that are fake invoices or sales orders. When you open it, you'll see it's a bill for a year of antivirus software or for a purchase of Bitcoin through PayPal.

They figure if they can fool someone into believing, and that person actually calls the number, there's a pretty good chance they're in a frantic state and can be talked out of their credit card number or other personal information.

TECH REVIEW

Gift ideas for grads

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

We are in the midst of graduation season, and I’ve been testing some gadgets that would make for great graduation gifts.

Cash is a traditional gift for graduates, but I know a lot of people who like their gift to be a bit more personal.

Fender Elie 6 Portable Bluetooth Speaker (\$299.00, fender.com)

Fender is well-known for their guitars and amplifiers, and now they’ve entered the portable speaker market with the Elie 6 and Elie 12 portable Bluetooth speakers.

The Elie 6 takes its design queues from a long line of Fender amplifiers with a clean rectangular shape. Fender brightens up the design with a single block of wood under the carrying handle.

Sonically, the Elie 6 has three drivers, one tweeter, one full-range and one woofer with a maximum output of 60 watts. The battery is rechargeable via USB-C and you can get 18 hours of playback from a charge. The battery can also charge your phone.

It can take input from any Bluetooth device, from XLR-quarter-inch input from things like a microphone or guitar and it can be used singly or paired with one or more other similar speakers (up to 100 speakers).

The Elie 6 would be very nice practice amp for guitar players and as a Bluetooth speaker, it can really fill a room with very clear sound.

Good sound does come with a bit of weight. The Elie 6 is portable but won’t necessarily disappear into your



Fender Elie 6 Portable Bluetooth Speakers.
Fender / TNS

backpack. It weighs 3.95 pounds.

It’s IP54 water and dust resistant, meaning it can take a splash at the pool, but not heavy rain or a dunk in the water.

Soundcore Space 2 noise-canceling headphones (\$129.99, soundcore.com)

The noise-canceling headphone market is crowded with brands like Bose, Sony and Apple.

Soundcore is the audio brand from Anker, a company known for great computer accessories.

The Space 2 are quite comfortable and there’s a wearing detection sensor in the ear cups to pause the music when you take them off.

They recharge with USB-C

and you can get up to 50

hours of music playback

with noise-canceling

on and 70 hours with noise-canceling

turned off. In case the battery

dies, you can charge them for

five minutes and listen for four

hours.

The noise-canceling is enabled with

a single button (on/off) and it works really

well. They also have a transparency mode that

lets you hear what’s going on around you.

The headphones’ sound can be tweaked

through the Soundcore app, and I was very

pleased with the quality of the music

playback. The app also has one-touch

white noise playback.

They come in black, white and sea foam green, and they come with a case. They have the ability to connect to two devices for easy switching between your phone and computer.

The Space 2 has a three-microphone array for taking phone calls.

At a price about half of what you’d pay for noise-canceling headphones from Bose or Sony, the Space 2 are a bargain and do a great job.

Pisen Mag-Safe Qi 2 15W Car Mount Charger TP-C70 (\$29.99, Amazon.com)

Everyone needs a phone mount, and if your phone has Qi wireless charging, the Pisen Mag-Safe Car Mount Charger is the just thing to keep the phone charged while keeping it

within reach on your dash.

Mag-Safe is standard on iPhones, but if you have an Android phone, there is an included metal ring to place on your phone or inside the case.

The magnetic mount is strong, but you can pull your phone off easily with one hand.

The charger comes with a USB-C cable and can charge your phone at up to 15W. An iPhone 17 can charge from 0-75 percent in an hour.

It mounts with just a twist to your car’s air conditioner vent in about 15 seconds.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.

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Mag-Safe is standard on iPhones, but if you have an Android phone, there is an included metal ring to place on your phone or inside the case.

The magnetic mount is strong, but you can pull your phone off easily with one hand.

The charger comes with a USB-C cable and can charge your phone at up to 15W. An iPhone 17 can charge from 0-75 percent in an hour.

It mounts with just a twist to your car’s air conditioner vent in about 15 seconds.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.

The headphones’ sound can be tweaked through the Soundcore app, and I was very pleased with the quality of the music playback. The app also has one-touch white noise playback.

They come in black, white and sea foam green, and they come with a case. They have the ability to connect to two devices for easy switching between your phone and computer.

The Space 2 has a three-microphone array for taking phone calls.

At a price about half of what you’d pay for noise-canceling headphones from Bose or Sony, the Space 2 are a bargain and do a great job.

Pisen Mag-Safe Qi 2 15W Car Mount Charger TP-C70 (\$29.99, Amazon.com)

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Soundcore Space 2 noise-canceling headphones.
Soundcore / TNS



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SOUND ADVICE

Fast-charger quickly comes to rescue on vacation trip

By DON LINDICH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Hero charger saves the day: I just got a new charger and had not planned on writing about it so soon, but it immediately proved its worth so I am going to relate the experience while it is fresh in my mind.

I am writing this week’s column from the Cabana Bay Beach Resort at Universal Orlando, my very favorite hotel worldwide for its immersive mid-century modern atmosphere, excellent lazy river and reasonable pricing for an on-property theme park hotel.

To get here I got up at 2 a.m. for a 5 a.m. direct flight to Orlando. After arriving I took an Uber to Cabana Bay, dropped off my luggage and was at the parks by 9 a.m. I had a full day and did not get to bed until after midnight, so I was up for almost 24 hours. I was tired and forgetful and did not connect my devices to chargers before falling asleep.

I woke up to a 15 percent phone battery and my Apple Watch was almost dead. What a disaster! I did not want to sit around waiting for them to charge or use my power bank, since I might need it to charge later in the day. Before I got in the shower I plugged the phone and watch into my new PD 3.1 charger, called The Youth 140W from AOHi. (Not sure where that name came from, but there wasn’t a model called The Adult or The Senior Citizen in the lineup.)

PD 3.1 is a new charging standard designed to be future-proof, and The Youth 140W supports high-speed charging through two ports simultaneously. Most chargers can only do this through one port, and The Youth 140W can even charge two laptops at high speed simultaneously. The battery charge numbers started climbing rapidly and I was able to get my phone

and watch charged to 80 percent by the time I left my room, and I made it through the day charging with my power bank later.

The plug folds for compactness and the charger is a bright yellow color that reminds me of a DeWalt power tool. Like a good power tool, the charger is ruggedly built, runs cool and is probably the most solid-feeling charger I have ever handled. The only downside is you must make sure it is firmly plugged in to vertical outlets or it may fall out if you jiggle the cable too hard, which is not uncommon with this kind of charger. (I used it with a horizontal outlet at Cabana Bay.)

PD 3.1 chargers can cost \$80 or more, so at \$59.99 retail The Youth 140W is a great deal and the current discount code FAST-CHARGER at iaohi.com reduces the price \$15 to only \$44.99. That’s a winning, high-performance value, and I am glad I took it on this trip!

Q. Do you have any recommendations for lightweight, cordless leaf blowers? – M.B., Edina, Minnesota

A. I get buried in leaves every fall so I have been through a bunch of leaf blowers. The Kobalt 40V I purchased was heavy and ineffective, so I kept the included battery for use with my lawnmower and gave the blower away. The Black & Decker 20V was only suitable for clearing dirt from the porch. The Ryobi One+ 18V 350 CFM from Home Depot is my run-away favorite for the power, easy handling and long battery life. If you buy one, get the \$139 package with 4.0 Ah battery and charger, even if you already have a Ryobi battery system. It is only \$30 more than the \$109 blower-only, and the battery is worth \$99.

Contact Don Lindich at www.soundadvicenews.com and use the “submit question” link on that site.



AOHi The Youth 140W Charger.

Don Lindich / TNS

HOME&GARDEN



Stone is used in different ways from side tables to coffee tables.



Some furnishings especially lighting are giving nod to periods such as Art Deco.
Handout photos / TNS



A chunky sofa displayed in a neutral fabric.



A curved sideboard adds a sense of interest when paired with a circular mirror.

DESIGN RECIPES

Trends in design

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Furniture markets like the annual spring market in High Point, North Carolina, often function much like runway shows in fashion, revealing the newest trends in furniture and home décor.

Curvy lines are prominent as are clean lines and neutral color palettes and natural materials. The trend is understated and minimal as opposed to bold and bright.

Scandinavian influences and organic materials

Light, blonde woods and Scandinavian inspired silhouettes are taking center stage, while darker woods are less prominent. This trend leans heavily into European influences, focusing on functionality, simplicity and craftsmanship.

Curves over corners

Sharp edges are giving way to rounded forms. From curved sofas to circular tables and arched details, organic shapes are being used to create flow and ease within a space. This shift introduces a more relaxed, inviting energy compared to rigid, boxy furniture.

Chunky, comfortable upholstery

Sofas are becoming deeper, fuller and more substantial. Thin arms are out and wider, chunkier arms are in. Neutral tones such as cream and taupe dominate over colors such as gray.

Stone used as a 'statement'

Next to wood, stone is one of the more popular materials being introduced in new product roll outs. Natural stone and materials to mimic stone are being used beyond

countertops, appearing on furnishings such as coffee tables, side tables and accent pieces.

Brass remains the dominant finish

Brass remains, hands down, the most popular finish, but in a more muted, sophisticated way. Brassy and bold is out; matte, muted and unpolished is in. This trend is prevalent in several ways including lighting, hardware and furniture accents.

Period influences

While mid-century modern pieces have always remained timeless, furniture makers are also giving a nod to other periods including art deco. Curves, sculptural lighting, two-tone furnishings and furnishings that mix materials are being used to help serve as statement pieces.

Unexpected shapes

Chairs are evolving into conversation pieces. From exaggerated curves to asymmetrical silhouettes, seating is being designed to stand alone as functional art while still integrating into the overall space.

Modern farmhouse

Traditional farmhouse style furniture is being reinterpreted with cleaner lines and more restrained detailing. The look is less rustic and more curated, blending classic references with contemporary finishes.

Cathy Hobbs is the owner of Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes, a home staging company based in New York City (www.cathyhobbs.com). She is also the owner of Highland Passive House, a Home Staging + Design Center based in New York's Hudson Valley (www.highlandpassivehouse.com). Cathy's practical, how-to design advice can also be found in her book, "Home Design Recipes."



A modern farmhouse style dresser with stylized pulls is a modern take on a vintage inspired piece.

TRAVEL



Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Dreamstime / TNS

What top museums are doing for America’s 250th birthday celebration

By NOREEN KOMPANIK
TravelPulse (TNS)

The United States of America turns 250 years old on July 4, 2026.

Museums across the U.S. are marking the important milestone not just with patriotic displays, but with exhibitions and programs that go beyond simple celebration to explore our nation’s full, complex story. The efforts of these top museums frame the semiquincentennial not just as a commemoration of the past, but as an opportunity to examine the present and imagine the country’s future.

Though even smaller museums across the U.S. plan to celebrate in their own unique way, let’s look at what some of our top institutions have planned for the year.

Smithsonian Institution

Launching a system-wide initiative called “Our Shared Future: 250,” the Smithsonian Institution is focusing on a big-picture national story while questioning what the next 250 years should look like. Its flagship exhibition “In Pursuit of Life, Liberty, & Happiness is built around 250 artifacts from our U.S. history. New and updated exhibits across multiple museums include a refreshed Declaration of Independence diorama and a photography exhibit reflecting America’s past and present.

Through August 2026, Smithsonian experts will visit communities across the country to share stories that reflect the richness and complexity of the American experience. “Making History, Making Change” lectures throughout the U.S. will explore how people, moments, and ideals have shaped our history and

continue to drive change.

The National Gallery of Art

Located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., this museum is featuring a major exhibition: “Dear America: Artists Explore the American Experience” with an angle of America through the eyes of its artists, past and present, including uncomfortable truths Americans need to know.

New funding has allowed artwork being sent across the country via an “Across the Nation” program that uses art to reinterpret U.S. identity with critical and diverse perspectives.

National Constitution Center

The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia’s focus is examining the messy, argumentative side behind the nation’s founding, showcasing rare artifacts such as early Constitution printings and interactive galleries exploring debates, protests, and conflicts behind our battle for independence.

The exhibit “America’s Founding” explores how power is divided among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, how each branch is empowered to check the others, and how authority is shared between the national government and the states.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City is taking a multi-layered, arts-focused approach to America’s 250th – less about a single blockbuster show and more about weaving the anniversary throughout the museum.

A centerpiece of the celebration is an exhibition called “Revolution,” which runs through August, featuring objects from across the Met’s vast collection. It includes founding fathers like George Washington and Benjamin Franklin along with indigenous leaders, enslaved and free Black voices, and colonial perspectives.

The museum’s goal is to show the roots, conflicts, and aftermath of the revolution – not just the victory story, treating the founding as it is – complicated, contested, and still relevant.

American Revolution Museum at Yorktown

As the nation marks its 250th Anniversary, the American Revolutionary Museum at Yorktown offers an immersive look at America’s founding, bringing the Revolution to life through personal stories, rare artifacts, films, and interactive exhibits tracing the path from colonial unrest to independence.

Visitors can step into the 18th century through outdoor living history, muster with troops in a re-created Continental Army encampment, watch military drills, and explore daily life on a Revolution-era farm. Hands-on demonstrations from living-history interpreters add depth and context to the experience.

The museum is a key partner in commemorating America’s 250th, with exhibitions and events throughout the year to include:

- Fresh Views of the American Revolution – October 18, 2025 – August 31, 2026
- Civically Yours Escape Room Family Day – June 27, 2026
- Liberty Celebration – July 4, 2026

4, 2026

- Yorktown Victory Celebration – October 17–18, 2026

Norman Rockwell Museum

Located in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, in the picturesque Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts, the museum is closely tied to Rockwell himself, who lived and worked there for the last 25 years of his life.

For the 250th anniversary, the museum is putting on a major, centerpiece exhibition, utilizing the artist as its anchor point. “Visions of a Nation: 250 Years from Revolution to Rockwell” will run from June 6 to Oct. 26, spanning the timeframe from the Revolution to today. The exhibition centers around nine core themes about American identity and exploring how artists over 250 years have reflected national ideals like freedom and democracy, helping shape what the ideals mean visually and culturally. The main focus lies in that American identity isn’t fixed – it’s something artists have been constantly redefining.

National Archives

The Washington D.C. museum is taking on one of the most ambitious and most dramatic projects tied to America’s 250th. Instead of visitors coming to our nation’s capital, the “Freedom Plane” tour will take some of the country’s most important founding documents out of Washington, D.C. and directly to people across the country, which almost never happens.

Between March and August 2026, a specially outfitted Boeing 737 is carrying rare historical documents between eight designated cities

and displaying them for one-to-two weeks at each location. For the first time ever, multiple historic documents will be on display together. These real artifacts that defined the country include:

- A rare 1823 engraving of the Declaration of Independence
- The Treaty of Paris (1783) that ended the Revolutionary War
- Early drafts of the U.S. Constitution
- Oaths of allegiance signed by figures like George Washington
- Records showing how delegates voted on the Constitution

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art

A newer, but major player in the U.S. museum realm, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art is a non-profit art museum in Bentonville, Arkansas, that celebrates the American spirit through art and nature. Founded by philanthropist Alice Walton and designed by architect Moshe Safdie, it has become a cultural landmark for its distinctive architecture, world-class collection, and free public access.

Through July 27, 2026, the museum will feature “America 250: Common Threads” covering 250 years of American art and history, from the Revolutionary era to today, along with historic documents (including an early engraving of the Declaration of Independence), paintings, textiles, quilts, photographs, and everyday objects. The exhibition sports a heavy emphasis on participation with hands-on crafts, interactive experiences, making the 250th feel interactive and community-driven, not just educational.

TRAVEL TIPS

Summer travel 2026 will be most expensive in years, airlines aren’t backing off high prices

If you were hoping to score any sort of bargain on summer travel this year, you’ll need to work especially hard to find it.

A new analysis of flight searches conducted by Points Path reveals that summer 2026 will be one of the most costly for consumers in a long time.

In particular, domestic cash fares are up roughly 15 percent between June 1 and Sept. 20, while points fares have surged 18 percent. Internationally, cash fares are up 12 percent and points fares are up 14 percent, according to the analysis.

Climbing prices are being driven by a variety of factors, including the U.S.-Israel attack on Iran, which has caused oil prices to spike globally. In response, airlines have been busy cutting capacity growth and

raising fees to offset higher jet fuel expenses. Carriers have also seized the opportunity to hike checked baggage fees to help cover their increased costs.

“Summer 2026 is shaping up to be one of the pricier travel seasons we’ve seen in recent years,” said Points Path Founder and CEO Julian Kheel. “And airlines clearly aren’t losing sleep over whether travelers will show up this summer. With demand still running strong, there’s simply no incentive to lower prices.”

Underscoring Kheel’s point about the steep travel costs remaining even after the oil market settles, Delta’s CEO said during a recent earnings call that higher checked baggage fees will likely be here to stay, serving as a revenue generator going forward. That news comes as Delta Air Lines reported record Q1 revenue of \$14.2 billion, an increase of 9 percent year-over-year.

Still, there are places to find value, suggests Points Path. And their latest report breaks down where and how to do that, along with key statistics on summer travel 2026. Here’s a closer look.

Key airfare trends

- Prices are up year over year for both domestic and international travel.
- Points fares are increasing even faster than cash fares
- Domestic fares remain volatile, especially on peak summer dates
- International fares are up ~6–12 percent, depending on route

Where travelers can still find deals

- Mid-to-late August (when demand starts to taper)
- Tuesdays (17.6 percent cheaper than Sundays), plus Wednesdays and Saturdays

- Secondary cities and alternative airports
- Routes with added airline capacity
- International premium cabins

Unexpected sweet spot

For deal hunters, here’s one bright spot to scout as you scope out summer flights.

- International premium cabins (business/first) are up just ~7 percent
- Compared to steep economy cabin increases, this is a rare value opportunity

“Travelers have been gravitating toward premium experiences ever since the pandemic, but a 7 percent increase in business and first-class cash fares is remarkably modest,” said Kheel. “For travelers who’ve been eyeing an upgrade, this summer may actually be the time to pull the trigger.”

Best (cheapest) travel timing

- Cheapest dates cluster in mid-to-late August (e.g., Aug. 1, Aug. 14,

Aug. 26)

- Peak pricing remains late June through July
- Booking early still matters as prices are expected to rise

Where travelers are going for summer 2026

So, where’s everyone headed this summer? The Points Path report sheds light on that as well. It seems domestically, summer travelers are focusing on two specific areas: major cities (especially those that get snowed-in during the winter) and West Coast destinations. Meanwhile, internationally, the usual trifecta is dominating summer get-aways.

- Domestic: Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, Boston
- International: London, Paris, Rome, Cancun, Dublin

— Mia Taylor / TravelPulse (TNS)

