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Protections bolstered for federal employees against political interference ahead of election

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

The twice-impeached, four-times indicted, and alleged predatory former President Donald Trump has pledged to "be a dictator on Day 1" if voters do the democracy-killing and unthinkable act of re-electing him.

The GOP's presumptive nominee and groups loyal to him have previously released plans to reshape the federal government, potentially terminating thousands of employees and replacing them with conservatives and MAGA cult followers while cementing Trump as America's first autocrat in the Oval Office.

However, President Joe Biden has moved to make that task much more difficult if Trump wins or steals the 2024 presidential election. This week, the Biden-Harris administration issued a new rule to protect federal employees through the Office of Personnel Management. The new regulations should help prevent the reclassification of career civil servants as political appointees or other at-will workers, making termination difficult.

"Today, my administration is announcing protections for 2.2



The GOP's presumptive nominee and groups loyal to him have previously released plans to reshape the federal government, potentially terminating thousands of employees and replacing them with conservatives and MAGA cult followers while cementing Trump as America's first autocrat in the Oval Office. (Photo via NNPA)

million career civil servants from political interference to guarantee they can carry out their responsibilities in the best interest of the American people," Biden said. The National Treasury Employee Union applauded the administration's decision, calling it a crucial step in preventing the arbitrary removal of nonpartisan professionals from federal agencies.

"This rule is about making sure the American public can continue to count on federal workers to apply their skills and expertise in carrying out their jobs, no matter their

personal political beliefs," said Rob Shriver, deputy director of the Office of Personnel Management.

Despite the proactive measures, concerns remain about future attempts to undermine these protections. If Trump, who will be the first former president to be a criminal defendant when he heads to trial in New York this month, were to secure another term in office, his administration could attempt to draft new rules through the Office of Personnel Management.

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People In The News ...



Hank Aaron



Muriel Bowser

NDG Quote of the Week: "The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression."

- W.E.B. Du Bois

Hank Aaron

Fifty years ago, the sports world watched in awe as Hank Aaron shattered baseball's most hallowed record, cementing his place as one of the game's greatest legends. To celebrate the anniversary of that historic moment, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum plans to immortalize Aaron's legacy with a monumental tribute.

In conjunction with the opening events for the new exhibit, "More Than Brave: The Life of Henry Aaron," at the Atlanta History Center, Hall of Fame Chairman



of the Board Jane Forbes Clark announced plans to unveil a bronze statue of Aaron at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown on May 23. The statue honors Aaron's

remarkable contributions both on and off the field.

"Hank Aaron's impact transcended the game of baseball," Clark stated. "His philanthropy, advocacy for youth empowerment, and trailblazing achievements as an executive have left an indelible mark on society. We are privileged to safeguard his legacy and are honored to unveil this statue as a lasting tribute to an American hero."

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1982 after a 23-year career with the Braves and Brewers, Aaron's legacy extends far beyond his monumental 715th ca-

reer home run, which surpassed Babe Ruth's record on April 8, 1974. A 25-time All-Star, Aaron still holds records for the most career RBIs and total bases.

Just how good was Aaron? Even if all his 755 career home runs were removed from the record books, he would still boast over 3,000 hits. The slugger, who died in 2021, made the All-Star team 25 times, established a record with 2,297 RBIs, 1,477 extra-base hits, and 6,856 total bases.

Officials displayed Aaron's Hall of Fame plaque during a Truist Park cer-

emony before this week's Atlanta Braves game against the New York Mets. The statue's creation was made possible through a generous gift from supporters Jane and Bob Crotty, with the guidance and approval of Aaron's widow, Billye. The statue will debut during the Hall of Fame Classic celebration over Memorial Day Weekend, coinciding with the May 25 Legends game featuring numerous former big leaguers at Cooperstown's Doubleday Field.

"Henry would be as thrilled as I am to see his statue at the National

Baseball Hall of Fame," expressed Billye Aaron. "His life embodied hope and perseverance, inspiring generations to pursue their dreams despite obstacles. This tribute is a testament to his love for the game and his desire to inspire young boys and girls everywhere."

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum has remained dedicated to preserving Aaron's legacy, including the exhibit "Hank Aaron: Chasing the Dream," unveiled in 2009. Additionally, Aaron pledged his entire personal

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Muriel Bowser

Mayor Muriel Bowser's proposed budget and legislative initiatives could have significant implications for Black and minority residents, particularly Washington, D.C. youth. Some opine that it's hurtful that an African American mayor in a District once heralded as "Chocolate City," would launch such initiatives. Here's a look at how these measures might affect them, along with potential solutions.

Elimination of Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund

The proposed elimination of the Early Childhood



Educator Pay Equity Fund, which provides stipends to caregivers and daycare teachers, could adversely impact Black and minority workers in the early childhood education sector and exacerbate existing inequalities in pay and employ-

ment opportunities within the workforce. According to the nonprofit Under3DC, with the current budget, childcare challenges for parents of infants and toddlers lead to negative employment impacts that cost DC \$8,100 per parent annually, or \$252 million aggregated across all similar DC parents. The annual cost to businesses for each parent is \$2,540, or \$79 million aggregated across DC parents.

"The mayor's budget takes an axe to the transformative investments—like the Pay Equity Fund—that DC has invested in in recent years, prioritizing the wealthy business sector and police force over invest-

ments in DC residents struggling to get by," said Tazra Mitchell of the DC Fiscal Policy Institute. "Eliminating the Pay Equity Fund and gutting the childcare subsidy program will decimate the early education sector," Mitchell continued.

"Not only does the mayor's approach undermine

her purported 'economic comeback' vision, it backtracks on DC's commitment to Black and brown educators fueling a sector that all other business sectors rely on. Her approach will set back the progress that DC has made on poverty reduction, greater economic inclusion, and closing racial

and gender disparities that harm us all."

Tax Hikes

Proposed tax hikes may impose further financial burdens on low-income Black and minority families, potentially widening economic disparities and

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Tim Kaine

(PRNewswire) -- Today, Harper Horizon recently released "Walk Ride Paddle: A Life Outside" from Tim Kaine. The Virginia Senator and former Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate delivers a compelling account of one man's journey across hundreds of miles of Virginia wilderness and a moving testament to the optimistic spirit of America.

With immediacy and honesty, Kaine pulls back the curtain to reveal his inner thoughts during such monumental times. Kaine's storytelling gift and wise observations offer a fascinating glimpse into the mind of a seasoned politician and outdoor enthusi-



ast. "Walk Ride Paddle is my love letter to Virginia, the power of democracy, and the great outdoors," said Senator Kaine.

In 2019, Tim Kaine – Virginia senator and former Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate – commemorated both his sixtieth

birthday and his twenty-fifth year in public office by undertaking a three-part journey across the Virginia landscape, as he hiked, cycled, and canoed across the state. Kaine reflects on his time as the Vice-Presidential candidate in a historic race and what that loss meant. His chronicle became an organic reflection of the extraordinary events occurring across America during that time, including two impeachment trials, a global pandemic, growing racial protests, the January 6 attack on the Capitol, and more.

During weekends and in Senate recess weeks, Kaine—over a period of

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Have a wonderful day!
Thurman R. Jones, Publisher
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Big Mama said - 'It is finished'

James Washington, job well done!

By Terry Allen
CEO, 1016 Media

Today, I pen down these words with a heavy heart, as I bid farewell to a titan of a man, James Washington. Known affectionately as "Big Jim," he wasn't just a figure in my life; he was a beacon of strength, resilience, and wisdom. As I reflect on his life and legacy, I can't help but feel an immense sense of gratitude for the lessons he imparted upon me.

First and foremost, James Washington embodied the values of a true leader. He led not with loud words or grand gestures, but with quiet determination and unwavering integrity. His actions spoke volumes, inspiring those around him to strive for excellence and to always lead with compassion.

As a strong and resilient Black male in America, James defied stereotypes and shattered barriers. He showed me that success is not defined by the color of your skin or the circumstances of your upbringing, but by the strength of your character and the depth of your determination.

Throughout his entrepreneurial career, James dedicated himself to the



James Washington and Terry Allen (Courtesy photo)

service of his community. He understood the power of storytelling and used it as a tool to uplift and empower those around him. He taught me the importance of aligning my own story with the community I serve, and the impact that authenticity can have on creating meaningful connections.

My greatest challenge as a public relations practitioner came when I worked for James's former wife, the amazing Vicki Meek, at the South Dallas Cultural Center. Balancing the responsibilities of my role while ensuring the activities of the center were well-covered by Dallas Weekly, where James was the Publisher, taught me invaluable lessons in professionalism and diplomacy. I experienced

the professional and personal relationship between the two of them, and I also have the additional joy of engaging with the wonderful talented children, Patrick and Elena.

But perhaps the greatest lesson I learned from James was the importance of being authentic and speaking my truth. He showed me how to navigate the complexities of professional journalism with grace and humility, and how to remain true to myself in my immersion of storytelling. It was as if he knew where I had to grow and what I had to be supported to obtain success in my PIO role. He taught me how to focus on information that matters, and he showed me how to "D.U.C.K" - Dodge

Unworthy Consciousness Kindly in all the people I met.

James Washington was not just a game changer; he was a World Changer. His mentorship to me and others was a gift that I will forever cherish, and I am eternally grateful to have known him. As I bid farewell to my beloved ally and friend, I take solace in the knowledge that his legacy will live on in the hearts and minds of all those he touched. I could take forever listing the individual he impacted that impacted me. James Washington, God favored me when I met you. You were the best father, publisher, mentor, friend and thought leader. Thanks for being a top 10 hit in the songbook of my life!

In closing, I urge you, dear reader, to reflect on your own experiences with James Washington and to share them with us. Let us honor his memory by continuing to live out his values of leadership, resilience, and service to others.

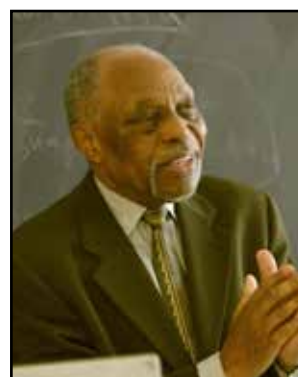
Please email me at the publication and share your James Washington experience.

Rest in power, Big Jim. You will be deeply missed, but your legacy will endure for generations to come.

Statement from the Los Angeles Urban League on the passing of Reverend Dr. Cecil 'Chip' Murray

The Los Angeles Urban League is deeply saddened by the passing of Rev. Dr. Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, a towering figure whose lifelong dedication to justice, equality, and community upliftment profoundly impacted the African-American community and beyond.

Rev. Dr. Murray's legacy is one of unwavering advocacy for civil rights, economic empowerment, and social change. As the



Philip Channing / USC

esteemed pastor of the historic First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Los

Angeles, he tirelessly fought against systemic injustices and championed initiatives to address poverty, education disparities, and racial inequality.

His visionary leadership not only transformed lives within his congregation but also inspired countless others nationwide. Rev. Dr. Murray's profound contributions as a spiritual leader, social activist, and scholar have left an indelible mark

on our collective consciousness, reminding us of the enduring importance of compassion, solidarity, and resilience in the pursuit of a more just society.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and all those whose lives he touched. May his legacy continue to illuminate our path toward a brighter, more equitable future for generations to come.

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Thinking outside the doctor's office: Poll looks at older adults' use of urgent care, retail clinics and more

(Newswise) — When today's older adults were growing up, urgent care centers and clinics inside retail stores didn't exist. But most of them have now embraced these non-traditional sites for getting medical care, a new national poll finds.

In the past two years, 60% of people age 50 to 80 have visited an urgent care clinic, or a clinic based in a retail store, workplace or vehicle, according to new findings from the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging.

Urgent care clinics were the most common alternative source of care, with 47% of adults age 50-80 visiting one at least once, and 23% going more than once, in the past two years.

Many of those who went to any alternative site said



they did so to avoid going to the emergency room (44%) or to get a vaccine, a test or an exam (35%). They went for a variety of health reasons, including getting immediate attention for symptoms and injuries,

getting vaccinated, and receiving tests or treatments for COVID-19 infections.

And 75% of those who have gone to such a site recently say they're likely to go again in the next two years.

But even as they sought care at these sites, most older adults who also have a primary care provider preferred the quality of care and sense of connection at their regular clinic. Among those who say they're not likely to go to an alternative site for care in the future, 74% said it's because they prefer to go to their regular provider.

The poll is based at the U-M Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation and supported by AARP and Michigan Medicine, U-M's academic medical center. Two members of AARP's Public Policy Institute worked with the poll team on the poll questions and report.

"The rapid rise in availability of these kinds of clinics, which typically offer walk-in convenience,

expanded hours, and self-scheduling of appointments in locations close to home, work or shopping, has transformed the American health care landscape in less than two decades," said poll director Jeffrey Kullgren, M.D., M.P.H., M.S. "With the nationwide shortage of primary care providers, it's important to understand how this age group, with generally higher medical needs, views and uses this type of care."

Kullgren is a primary care physician at the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System and associate professor of internal medicine at U-M.

"Access to timely and convenient care was critical for older adults during the pandemic, and our research shows alternative care options will continue to be in demand for the long-term,"

said Susan Reinhard, senior vice president and director of AARP Public Policy Institute. "Policymakers and clinicians must ensure that patients receive high quality care at sites like urgent care clinics that is well-coordinated with their usual health care provider."

Other key findings from the poll:

- The percentage of older adults who had gone to a retail clinic was half that of the proportion who had gone to an urgent care center, at 28% vs 47%. Only 9% had gone to a clinic at their worksite, and 5% had gotten care from a traveling provider based in a bus or van.

- Those in their 50s and early 60s were more likely than those age 65 to 80 to

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Health groups file second lawsuit against the FDA over tobacco

While the Biden administration delays the rule on menthol, death toll rises daily

WASHINGTON, DC — The African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council (AATCLC), Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), and the National Medical Association (NMA), represented by Christopher Leung of Leung Law PLLC, have filed a second lawsuit against the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the agency's inaction on issuing a final rule banning menthol cigarettes. This lawsuit comes more than seven months after the FDA's initial date for finalizing the new rule and follows the FDA's 15-year delay in equitable policymaking.

"The relentless and racist tobacco industry targeting has killed too many members of the Black community," said Carol McGruder, Co-Chair of the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council. "If Black lives truly matter, then we must end the sale of menthol cigarettes and do it now!"

The Plaintiffs' first law-

suit was filed on June 17, 2020. Since then, approximately 39,789 Americans have died from menthol cigarettes.

The initial complaint sought to compel the FDA to act on its earlier conclusions that removing menthol cigarettes from the marketplace would benefit public health. The lawsuit specifically asked the Court to compel the FDA's determination on whether to add menthol to the list of prohibited characterizing flavors — a determination that the FDA delayed making for over 10 years. The joint lawsuit followed the 2013 Citizen Petition from the Public Health Law Center which called on the FDA to prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes.

"We're extremely disappointed to be forced to file this second lawsuit against the FDA in support of protecting Americans from menthol cigarettes," said Laurent Huber, Executive Director of Action on Smoking and Health. "The FDA's own research con-

firms that a menthol ban would save lives; there is no scientific reason to delay finalizing this rule."

In 2011, the FDA's own scientific advisory committee concluded that the "Removal of menthol cigarettes from the marketplace would benefit public health in the United States."

As a result of the Plaintiffs' first lawsuit, the FDA made the landmark determination to add menthol to the list of banned characterizing flavors in cigarettes. To begin that rulemaking process, the FDA issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to ban the sale of menthol cigarettes in the marketplace. Given that success, the Plaintiffs voluntarily dismissed their initial lawsuit.

Today, three years later, the FDA has failed to take the final step to formally promulgate and publish the proposed rule. After setting an initial date of August 2023 to issue this rule, the FDA has unreasonably and unlawfully delayed this life-saving rule.

"As African American physicians, we are deeply disturbed at the continuing delays in FDA's finalizing of the ban on menthol cigarettes," said Dr. Yolanda Lawson, President of the National Medical Association. "Our patients, more than any other group, become disabled and die prematurely due to the continued use of these cigarettes," she said.

The Biden Administration has fallen for disinformation and fearmongering by the tobacco industry. The industry is sowing doubt and confusion and taking advantage of real issues in our country and claiming that removing menthol will harm Black lives, when just the opposite is true. We remain disheartened to be forced to call on the Biden Administration to prioritize human life.

Attorney Christopher Leung stated, "FDA's delay in issuing a final rule is harming public health. As the FDA's own analysis found, banning menthol

cigarettes will reduce youth smoking, increase successful quit-attempts among current people who smoke, and save hundreds of thousands of lives — as well as billions of dollars spent on treating smoking-related harms. It's time for the FDA

to act."

Tobacco products kill when used as intended. Menthol cigarettes make initiation easier, addiction stronger, and quitting harder. A ban on menthol cigarettes would save 6,000 Black lives every year.



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Trump doubles down on immigration from white countries only

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Former President Donald Trump has reignited controversy with inflammatory remarks suggesting a preference for immigrants from predominantly white nations while denigrating those from Latin America, and primarily Black nations. At a private event, Trump reportedly joked about welcoming immigrants from “nice” countries like Denmark, Switzerland, and Norway, again demonstrating his racial bias in immigration policy.

Trump’s comments, revealed by New York Times correspondent and CNN analyst Maggie Haberman, highlight a troubling stance on immigration that aligns with his past rhetoric. The twice-impeached and four-times indicted former presi-



At a private event, Trump reportedly joked about welcoming immigrants from “nice” countries like Denmark, Switzerland, and Norway, again demonstrating his racial bias in immigration policy. (Photo via NNPA)

dent’s insinuation that only immigrants from certain nations are desirable for entry into the United States drew swift condemnation from the Biden-Harris campaign. “[The comments] are alarming,” said James Singer, a spokesperson

for the Biden-Harris campaign. Singer also noted how Trump has repeatedly praised dictators and declared he’d be a dictator on day one if he’s re-elected. Trump’s campaign declined to comment about what the presumptive GOP nominee

said at the private dinner. “Why can’t we allow people to come in from nice countries, I’m trying to be nice,” Trump reportedly said. “Nice countries, you know, like Denmark, Switzerland? Do we have any people coming in from

Denmark? How about Switzerland? How about Norway?”

In addition to his discriminatory remarks, Trump blasted Latin American immigrants, likening them to notorious gang members. Critics have said such language perpetuates harmful stereotypes and exacerbates divisions within society.

Further, Trump’s speculations about the future of American democracy have raised alarms. Suggesting that the 2024 election could be the last one in the country’s history, Trump’s comments continue his concerning trend of authoritarian rhetoric that undermines democratic norms.

“This could very well be the last election this country ever has,” Trump said, echoing sentiments often heard at his rallies.

Trump’s engagement with billionaire backers on

taxation matters has further highlighted concerns about cronyism and inequality. By prioritizing tax cuts that primarily benefit the wealthy, opponents said Trump’s policies perpetuate economic disparities and favor the interests of the elite.

• The Biden-Harris campaign noted the list of billionaires backing Trump, arguing that they’re scammers, racists, and extremists. Among them:

• John Paulson wants to cut Social Security and opposed financial regulations to protect Americans after the 2008 crash, which he profited from.

• Robert Bigelow, who complained he couldn’t evict tenants out of his buildings during the pandemic and supports Florida’s extreme Don’t Say

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Racial bias uncovered in kidney transplantation system: Thousands of Black patients prioritized after years of waiting

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Five years ago, Arlette Ebanks experienced severe kidney pain that she believed suggested a criminal need for a transplant. Her doctors disagreed, but the 52-year-old Northeast, D.C., resident, and mother of two who worked for the Department of Transportation for more than half of her life until her deteriorating health landed her on permanent disability, had grown ever more anxious as health care providers attempted various measures of maintenance.

Recently, physicians at George Washington University Hospital told Ebanks that she should have been on the transplant list, and understandably, Ebanks wondered why previous doctors hadn’t done so. Now, Ebanks knows why. “All this time, all



At issue is a once widely used test that overestimated how well Black people’s kidneys were functioning, making them look healthier than they really were. An automated formula calculated results for Black and non-Black patients that were far different from those of others, delaying organ failure diagnosis and, ultimately, proper evaluation for a kidney transplant. (Photo via NNPA)

this stress and worry, was all because I’m Black,” Ebanks stated with intense incredulity in an interview with the Washington Informer.

At issue is a once widely used test that overestimated how well Black people’s kidneys were functioning, making them look healthier than they really were. An automated formula calculated results for Black and

non-Black patients that were far different from those of others, delaying organ failure diagnosis and, ultimately, proper evaluation for a kidney transplant.

The disparity only exacerbated existing inequities, with Black patients being more susceptible to needing a new kidney but less likely to receive one. “On the one hand,” Ebanks remarked, “I have not only

been put on the waiting list, but moved up to where I am now more confident that I will get a new kidney. On the other hand, it’s infuriating that we keep seeing how racism in medicine, bias in healthcare, is caus-

ing unnecessary pain and suffering among African Americans.”

The U.S. organ transplant network has now ordered hospitals and care facilities to use race-neutral test results only when

adding new patients to the kidney transplant waiting list. Further, the National Kidney Foundation and the American Society of Nephrology told laboratories

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Gallup finds Black generational divide on affirmative action

By Charlene Crowell

Each spring, many aspiring students and their families begin receiving college acceptance letters and offers of financial aid packages. This year's college decisions will add yet another consideration: the effects of a 2023 Supreme Court, 6-3 ruling that ended the use of affirmative action. No longer can race be considered as one of many other factors to reach college admissions decisions.

Writing for the majority, Chief Justice John Roberts said in part, "In these cases we consider whether the admissions systems used by Harvard College and the University of North Carolina, two of the oldest institutions of higher learning in the United States, are lawful under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. These cases involve whether a university may make admissions decisions that turn on an applicant's race."

"[T]he Harvard and UNC admissions programs cannot be reconciled with



Mike Von / Unsplash

the guarantees of the Equal Protection Clause," continued the Chief Justice. "Both programs lack sufficiently focused and measurable objectives warranting the use of race, unavoidably employ race in a negative manner, involve racial stereotyping, and lack meaningful end points. We have never permitted admissions programs to work in that way, and we will not do so today."

A strongly-worded dissenting opinion by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, challenged the majority, asserting that affirmative action remains both viable and

necessary.

"This limited use of race has helped equalize educational opportunities for all students of every race and background and has improved racial diversity on college campuses," wrote Justice Sotomayor. "Although progress has been slow and imperfect, race-conscious college admissions policies have advanced the Constitution's guarantee of equality and have promoted Brown's vision of a Nation with more inclusive schools."

"The Court subverts the constitutional guarantee of equal protection by further

entrenching racial inequality in education, the very foundation of our democratic government and pluralistic society. Because the Court's opinion is not grounded in law or fact and contravenes the vision of equality embodied in the Fourteenth Amendment, I dissent," concluded Sotomayor.

In the aftermath of this consequential decision, as many as 30 states have now either filed or enacted new laws against teaching Black history or 'other divisive concepts', as well as defunding or outright ending diversity, equity and in-

clusion initiative. Counted among these states are Alabama, Florida, and Texas where multi-million Black residents are directly affected.

While many might presume widespread unity in Black America over the Supreme Court ruling, a survey analysis by Gallup's Center on Black Voices published earlier this year shows a distinct and disturbing generational divide on affirmative action. Survey respondents were asked about the effect the affirmative decision may have in four specific areas:

1. Higher education in general;
2. Educational opportunities for Blacks;
3. The ability of people of one's own race/ethnicity to attend college; and
4. Diversity of college campuses.

Numerically, 56 percent of Black adults aged 40 and older mostly view the decision negatively. But among younger Black adults, aged 18 to 39, the affirmative action reversal is viewed positively by 62 percent. Moreover, many

younger Blacks anticipated the decision will have no impact at all on their educations and futures.

Another new and related survey reflects a growing political divide.

Jointly released by the Associated Press and the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center (NORC), the survey asked the question, "Do you think each of the following is doing a good job or a bad job or neither upholding democratic values in the United States?"

Respondents were asked to share their views on government – including the Supreme Court, as well as Congress, and presidential candidates. Overall, 45 percent said the nation's highest court was doing a poor job. But when responses were screened by party affiliation, 68 percent of Democrats said the court was doing a poor job, compared to 21 percent of Republicans agreeing.

A coalition of 12 national civil rights advocates including the National Urban

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City of Irving's Teen Court places fourth at state competition

The City of Irving's Teen Court program placed fourth at the Texas Teen Court Mock Trial Competition in Arlington on March 23.

Their performance signifies the highest place ever achieved by a team representing Irving's program. The team, led by Juvenile Case Manager, Rachel Castro, included Rahma Shardow (Irving High School Junior), Rishi Dasari (Coppell High School Senior), and Neel Mavalli (Coppell High School Sophomore). Photo Attached

The competition allows students to showcase their in-depth knowledge of the legal system, boost criti-

cal thinking abilities, foster teamwork, and improve public speaking skills.

Competition organizers provide teams with the details of a specific case. A panel of practicing judges and attorneys watch as teams study the case, research relevant laws and prepare arguments. Then during three trial rounds, each team presents both the prosecution's perspective and the defense's perspective. Students step into various roles, including attorneys, witnesses, and defendants. Panel members score teams on performance, legal knowledge, presentation skills, and their ability to handle

objections and unexpected developments. The team with the highest overall score wins.

The Irving Teen Court program continues to boast the reputation as a model program across the state, underscoring Irving's ongoing commitment to provide meaningful and value-enriching opportunities for youth development.

The program offers a great opportunity for young people to explore the legal field, and for the community to engage with teens in a meaningful way. For more information about Irving's Teen Court program visit, <https://www.cityofirving.org/427/Teen-Court>.



Courtesy photo



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Native American student works to create missing persons database

(Newswise) — MIS-SOULA – Haley Omeasoo was already studying forensic science at the University of Montana when she saw the poster that redefined her life.

The 2017 poster announced that her former high school classmate, Ashley Loring HeavyRunner, had gone missing on the Blackfeet Reservation in northern Montana. Just 20 at the time, HeavyRunner has never been found in the seven years since.

HeavyRunner’s plight, and the cases of other missing and murdered indigenous persons (MMIP), gave Omeasoo a new mission: to use her skills to help families searching for lost loved ones, and use DNA analysis to return the remains of Native Americans to their families and tribal groups.

Omeasoo, a registered

member of the Hopi Nation, is also a Blackfeet descendant who grew up on the Blackfeet reservation. She is now a Ph.D. student in forensic and molecular anthropology at UM, working to create the first DNA database of Blackfeet Nation members. She also hopes that one day, she can set up a forensic science lab on the reservation – the first of its kind in Montana.

If unidentifiable remains were found, DNA in the database could determine whether the person had been a member of the tribe and could be used to link the remains to family members with similar DNA markers.

To work toward that goal, Omeasoo and her husband, Blackfeet tribal member Vince Omeasoo, set up a company known as Ohkomi Forensics, based

on the Blackfeet word for “to use one’s voice.”

“We stand as unwavering advocates for those who have gone missing or have been tragically taken from their families,” the company’s website says. “We work tirelessly to raise awareness, demand justice and support affected communities in their journey towards healing.”

The aching search for answers by families of missing relatives resonates strongly with Omeasoo, 27, who is the mother of two children, Sage, 8, and Soren, 2.

But she also sees the tragedy in broader terms.

“As Indigenous people, we are all impacted by this issue in one way or another,” Omeasoo said. “Because this issue doesn’t get as much media attention as it should, and our people do

not have the resources and support to combat this issue, it’s time we started to find ways to provide those resources to our home communities.”

Missing Persons in Montana

Montana is at the center of a grim trend. According to the Montana governor’s office, Native people make up about 7% of the state’s population but account for a quarter of missing per-



Haley Omeasoo plans to earn her Ph.D. in forensic and molecular anthropology next year (Credit: UM Photos by Ryan Brennecke)

See MISSING, Page 12

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let's go.

Millions across North America awed by total solar eclipse phenomenon

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent

The eagerly anticipated celestial spectacle of a total solar eclipse finally descended upon North America after a seven-year hiatus, captivating millions of skywatchers on Monday. With its grand entrance at the Mexican beachside resort town of Mazatlan, the eclipse marked the beginning of a mesmerizing journey along the “path of totality,” stretching across various regions of the continent.

Eclipse enthusiasts congregated at numerous vantage points along the path, which spanned from Mexico’s Pacific Coast through Texas, traversing 14 other



Eclipse enthusiasts congregated at numerous vantage points along the path, which spanned from Mexico’s Pacific Coast through Texas, traversing 14 other U.S. states before reaching Canada. (Jongsun Lee)

U.S. states before reaching Canada. Cities like Wilmington, Del., Philadelphia, Penn., Baltimore, Md., and New York City witnessed citizens stepping outside their usual routines to behold this historic event. Similar scenes unfolded in urban centers across Illinois,

Ohio, and Texas, where individuals paused to witness the cosmic marvel.

At a duration of up to 4 minutes and 28 seconds, the 2024 total eclipse exceeded its predecessor’s duration in 2017, which lasted up to 2 minutes and 42 seconds. According to NASA, total

eclipses can range from a fleeting 10 seconds to an astonishing 7-1/2 minutes.

Other cities along the path of totality, such as San Antonio, Austin, and Dallas in Texas; Indianapolis, Indiana; Cleveland, Ohio; Erie, Pennsylvania; both Niagara Falls, New York, and Niagara Falls, Ontario, along with Montreal, Quebec, hosted eager eclipse-watchers. Approximately 32 million people in the United States reside within the path of totality, with federal officials predicting an additional 5 million to witness the phenomenon.

Numerous eclipse-watching events unfolded at bars, stadiums, fairgrounds, and parks along the eclipse’s trajectory, offering diverse

opportunities for people to experience this rare event. Scientists estimated that the entire process, from the initial moment the moon begins to obscure the sun to the culmination of totality and the subsequent return to normalcy, took about 80 minutes.

Veteran eclipse observers have described the moments preceding totality as ominous, with shadows taking on a peculiar sharpness and sunlight assuming an eerie hue. Just before totality, a phenomenon known as “shadow bands” may manifest, creating shimmering patterns akin to those seen at the bottom of a swimming pool.

As totality approaches, stars become visible in

the midday sky, while the abrupt darkness causes temperatures to plummet. “When a solar eclipse reaches totality, nocturnal wildlife sometimes wakes up, thinking that it’s nighttime, and non-nocturnal wildlife might think it’s time to head to sleep,” NASA officials wrote on the agency’s website.

The final glimpse of brilliant sunlight before totality creates the enchanting “diamond ring effect,” wherein a bright spot appears along the lunar edge as the sun’s corona forms a luminous ring around the moon.

According to NASA, the next solar eclipse that can be seen from the contiguous United States will occur on Aug. 23, 2044.

Biden unveils sweeping student loan relief plans, targeting racial disparities

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

President Joe Biden has announced comprehensive plans to provide substantial relief to borrowers, particularly those from marginalized communities dis-

proportionately burdened by debt. The proposed measures, announced on Monday, April 8, would represent a significant step towards making higher education more accessible and equitable for millions of Americans.

Despite Republican op-

position and a previous rejection by the U.S. Supreme Court, the Biden-Harris administration is implementing yet another round of student loan forgiveness measures.

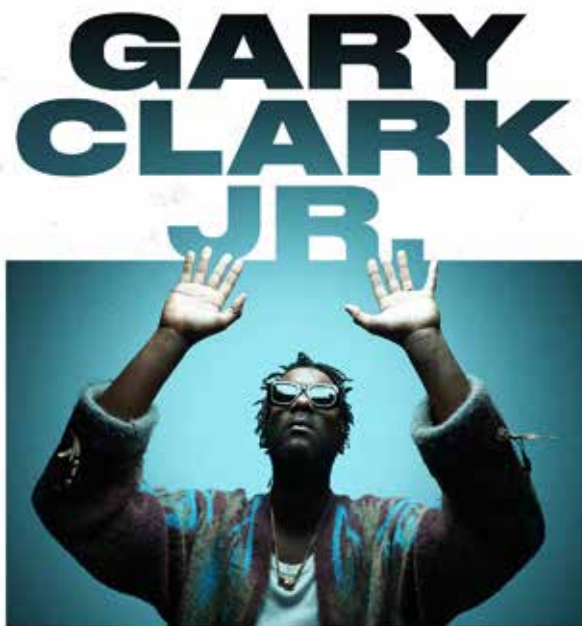
Since taking office, the Biden-Harris Administration has prioritized reform-

ing the federal student loan program, focusing on easing borrowers’ financial burdens. The administra-

tion has already approved debt cancellation for 4 million borrowers, offering them much-needed breath-

ing room and economic mobility.

See RELIEF, Page 12



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Rebecca Hall and Brian Tyree Henry in *Godzilla X Kong: The New Empire*. (Photo via NNPA)

Film Review: 'Godzilla X Kong: The New Empire' is not that ferocious

By Dwight Brown
NNPA Film Critic

(**) *Godzilla* and *King Kong* use to have a beef. Now that they've kissed and made up, there's no real meat in this generic big creature smackdown.

Also, any production involving *Godzilla* or *Kong* now stands in the shadow of the Oscar-winning *Godzilla Minus One*. There's no excuses anymore. If writer/director Takashi Yamazaki can craft a heart-felt script with three-dimensional characters. If Yamazaki, Kiyoko Shibuya, Masaki Takashi and Tatsuji Nojima can conjure eyeball-entrancing visual effects so stunning they garner the ultimate achievement in artistry, an Academy Award. Then any filmmakers who come after them can step up. If they really want to.

Something is riling the titan *Godzilla*, who's been comfortably curled up and napping in Rome's Colosseum. On the other side of the world, the young girl Jia (Kaylee Hottle, *Godzilla vs Kong*) is feeling weird. Cryptically, something is bothering her. A weird vibe. She's also worried about her friend *King Kong*, who's on Skull Island, his home. He's being watched over by a team of scientists and a veterinarian named Trapper

(Dan Stevens, *Beauty and the Beast*).

Jia's adoptive mom, Dr. Ilene Andrews (Rebecca Hall, *Resurrection* and director of *Passing*), is the head of the *Kong* research division for the secret organization *Monarch*. She takes her daughter's inklings so seriously she enlists the help of Bernie Hayes (Brian Tyree Henry, *Causeway*), a weirdo conspiracy theorist podcaster whose show *Titan Truths* is obsessed with the mega monsters. Something is up. That's the buzz.

Views of *Godzilla* and *Kong* aren't entrancing. The overly obvious computer-generated trickery is telltale. In the latest *Planet of the Apes* franchise, it's mind-boggling how real the creatures look. In *Godzilla Minus One*, the big boy doesn't look real, but there is something about him that appears organic and not like a cloud of effects. Also, in opening scenes, as *Godzilla* rises and travels, attacking nuclear plants and absorbing radiation for some unknown reason, planes and helicopters fly around his head. They look like a kindergartener's toys.

As the film progresses and an enigmatic signal attracts action to the Hollow Earth, a hidden realm in the planet's core, more beasts are unearthed. None look

any more vivid than the two on the surface. The verdant underworld landscape is interesting (production designer Tom Hammock, *Godzilla vs. Kong*), but the music (Tom Holkenborg and Antonio Di Iorio), interior sets, flying capsules, costumes (Emily Seresin) and cinematography (Ben Seresin) don't enhance those scenes. If there is a saving grace, it's that the fights, battles and combat, which lead up to a do-or-die climax with *Godzilla* and *Kong* teaming up to for the big brawl, are well paced and measured throughout which should delight action/adventure/sci-fi fans.

Being original, innovative or deep is not part of the scope of the script by director/writer Adam Wingard (*Godzilla vs Kong*) and screenwriter Terry Rossio. E.g., the chit-chat on the space craft that flies Jia, Bernie, Tanner and Dr. Andrews to the center of the world and the *Monarch* outpost, is banal. The shuttle is flown by the gruff pilot Mikael (Alex Ferns), a mean taskmaster: "Try not to swallow your tongue." Bernie, the scared passenger: "What?!". Tanner is blasé. Jia hopeful. And Andrews in charge. Words and character development don't get

See FILM, Page 13

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DULUTH, MINN. 1934

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MUSIC & LYRICS BY BOB DYLAN

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Beyoncé's 'Cowboy Carter' Gallops to No. 1 on Billboard 200

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Beyoncé has once again proven her dominance in the music industry as her latest album, "Cowboy Carter," rides triumphantly to the top of the Billboard 200 chart. Released on March 29, the album's debut at No. 1 marks a stellar achievement for the superstar and stands as the highest-selling album of 2024 thus far.

With an impressive 407,000 equivalent album units, "Cowboy Carter" secures Beyoncé's eighth chart-topping album, solidifying her status as a musical powerhouse. Fans and critics alike said the remarkable feat reflects her artistry's enduring appeal



With an impressive 407,000 equivalent album units, "Cowboy Carter" secures Beyoncé's eighth chart-topping album, solidifying her status as a musical powerhouse. Fans and critics alike said the remarkable feat reflects her artistry's enduring appeal and influence. (Photo via NNPA)

and influence.

With her latest achievement, Beyoncé becomes the first Black woman to debut

at No. 1 on the Top Country Albums chart, highlighting her groundbreaking impact across genres and the al-

bum's wide-ranging appeal that resonates with audiences worldwide.

Streaming counted as pivotal in "Cowboy Carter's" triumph, with 232,000 units attributed to streaming equivalent albums. This marks Beyoncé's most significant streaming week ever, demonstrating her ability to captivate audiences across digital platforms.

In addition to digital success, the impact of "Cowboy Carter" is felt in physical sales, with traditional album sales totaling 168,000 units. The album's limited edition vinyl releases also made a significant mark, selling 62,000 copies and claiming the title of the best-selling vinyl album of 2024, a testament to the enduring appeal of physical music.

Beyoncé's chart-topping prowess extends beyond "Cowboy Carter." She surpasses Janet Jackson to claim the fourth-most No. 1 albums among women on the Billboard 200, placing her alongside icons such as Madonna and Barbra Streisand.

"Cowboy Carter" represents the second chapter of Beyoncé's ambitious "Renaissance" trilogy project, a musical journey that intrigues with its diverse array of collaborators and musical influences.

The album's thematic depth and sonic innovation resonate with fans and critics alike, solidifying Beyoncé's status as a visionary artist.

Reflecting on the album's inspiration, Beyoncé recently recounted her jour-

ney to embrace the country music genre. "Cowboy Carter was born out of an experience that I had years ago where I did not feel welcomed,"

Beyoncé wrote on Instagram regarding her 2016 performance at the Country Music Association Awards, where backlash on social media was immediate and drenched in racial overtones.

"But, because of that experience, I did a deeper dive into the history of country music and studied our rich musical archive. It feels good to see how music can unite so many people around the world, while also amplifying the voices of some of the people who have dedicated so much of their lives to educating on our musical history."

TRUMP, from Page 5

Gay law.

• John Catsimatidis, who compared taxes on the wealthy to Hitler killing Jews and his business, has been forced to pay millions in lawsuits over unfair labor practices and consumer safety violations.

• José "Pepe" Fanjul refused to fire his assistant, who was married to (two!) KKK leaders commented via a company spokesperson that "we wouldn't terminate them for that."

• Jamie McCourt pocketed over \$10 million from her stock shares before public citizens were made aware of the pandemic's severity, all while Trump played down the virus.

• Former GOP Senator Kelly Loeffler, who touted 2020 election lies, backed an anti-LGBTQ adoption agency and supported ripping away health care from millions of Americans by repealing the Affordable Care Act.

• Robert Mercer opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, calling it a major mistake, and believed the government was backward for helping "weak people get strong."

• Jeff Yass has avoided \$1 billion in taxes and wants to privatize Social Security.

New York Jets owner • Woody Johnson has repeatedly disparaged women for their looks and ques-

tioned why the Black community celebrates Black History Month.

• Steve Wynn, who was accused by dozens of workers of sexual misconduct.

• Chicago Cubs owner Todd Ricketts, who made his money screwing over retirees by shedding pension obligations and health care promises, opposes the idea that the "government can serve to protect the public's well-being."

• Phil Ruffin fought against housekeepers trying to unionize at his Vegas hotel (jointly owned by Donald Trump) and furloughed more than 4,000 of his own employees without pay.

• Wilbur Ross, whom the Biden-Harris campaign said made his fortune laying off

American workers and using bankruptcy to strip retirees of health benefits.

Meanwhile, Singer said its vital American voters reject Trump's authoritar-

ian impulses and uphold the values of democracy and inclusivity.

"Independence Day in Donald Trump's America will apparently no longer be

July 4," Singer stated. "He's promised publicly he'll be a dictator on his first day, and now privately muses about this November's election being our country's last."

GALLUP, from Page 6

League, National Action Network, NAACP, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and the National Council of Negro Women, also said the nation's high-

est court is the problem when it comes to affirmative action, saying its decision, "serves as a distressing reminder of the uphill battle we continue to face in dismantling systemic racism and the potential implications this decision can have on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the workplace."

Whatever solution(s) are needed, one thing remains clear: America's constitution may have promised that all are created equal; but in education, the fulfillment of that promise has yet to become real.

Charlene Crowell is a senior fellow with the Center for Responsible Lending. She can be reached at Charlene.crowell@responsiblelending.org.

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DALLAS CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates

BIAS, from Page 5

to transition to race-neutral equations when calculating kidney function.

The policy shift has led to major adjustments, and between January 2023 and mid-March 2024, over 14,300 Black candidates had their wait times recalibrated, resulting in more than 2,800 successful transplants, including Ebanks.

Dr. Nwamaka Eneanya, an assistant professor at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania Health

System, emphasized the detrimental impact of race-based equations on clinical decisions, particularly in assessing renal function.

Dr. Eneanya, a vocal advocate for removing race from medical equations, highlighted the lack of biological differences between races and the inherent flaws in using race-based multipliers. She told her university's newspaper that, despite mounting evidence, many clinicians continue to rely on these outdated prac-

tices, perpetuating harm to Black patients.

"Human genome studies have shown there are no inherent biological differences between races," Dr. Eneanya stated. "Those studies reporting that Black people had greater muscle mass were flawed, but no one questioned them."

As the director of Health Equity, Anti-Racism, and Community Engagement at Penn Medicine, Dr. Eneanya spearheads internal initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion within the Renal Electrolyte and

Hypertension Division. Additionally, she is actively involved in community outreach programs to address racial disparities in kidney disease awareness and screening.

"Not everyone approaches medicine with a health equity lens. Many clinicians are not aware of existing disparities — how Black patients do not get referred to nephrology as early as white patients and do not have sufficient access to transplant [procedures]," she asserted. "In medicine, the tendency is

to say, 'This is what a study showed, so this is what we should do,' focusing on biomarkers and statistical tests without examining issues of ethics or health equity."

Dr. Eneanya noted that the revelation of racial bias within the kidney transplantation system underscores the pressing need for reformative measures to ensure equitable healthcare access for all individuals, regardless of race or ethnicity.

"I sit on a joint American Society of Nephrology-

National Kidney Foundation task force that is revising formal eGFR reporting guidelines to exclude racial bias," Dr. Eneanya stated. "Many physicians across the country, including some at Penn, have stopped using the race multiplier already. And while the eGFR is a frontline test for kidney function, there are other tests that don't incorporate race. When there is any doubt about the accuracy of an eGFR score, other confirmatory tests that do not use race should be performed."

BOWSER, from Page 2

hindering their ability to access essential services and resources. Despite being called a budget of "shared sacrifice," critics said Bowser's proposed fiscal year 2025 budget and financial plan takes an ax to transformative investments in residents who struggle to get by — like the Pay Equity Fund, "baby bonds" program, and the DC Earned Income Tax Credit — while prioritizing the wealthiest businesses.

The budget also raises the sales tax, which disproportionately affects residents with low and moderate incomes who spend every dollar they earn to get by. As is, the proposed budget will set back the progress that DC has made on poverty reduction, greater economic inclusion, and shared prosperity.

"People are DC's economic engine—not any one neighborhood," said Erica Williams, Executive Director of the DC Fiscal Policy Institute. "Prioritizing public investments that support DC's most-in-need children, workers, families, and

businesses, as we have over the last few years, is critical to growing the strength and resilience of our economy.

Legislation on Youth

Prosecution and Truancy

Bowser's legislative proposal to increase prosecution of children and teens who commit certain crimes and address truancy cases has drawn criticism from advocates and attorneys. Restricting prosecutors from using plea agreements and banning diversion programs for youth facing gun charges could disproportionately impact Black and minority youth, contributing to the perpetuation of systemic inequalities within the criminal justice system.

"We're concerned this bill will increase the incarceration of young people and is really relying on practices that we know are not effective for addressing truancy," said Kaitlin Banner is the deputy legal director for the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs. "We know the leading causes of truancy in D.C. and nationwide are students who are not

in stable housing, students who are homeless, students with disabilities who don't have access to the accommodations and services they need in school," Banner said. "We want to make sure that the programs that address those root causes are funded robustly in this budget."

Effectiveness of Legal Consequences

Most experts point to research which suggests that imposing more legal consequences on children and teens may not effectively address underlying issues such as violence and truancy. Instead, such punitive measures could potentially exacerbate recidivism rates and fail to address the root causes of youth-related challenges. "These proposed cuts would have a severe impact on Legal Aid DC's ability to provide legal services to low-income residents at a time when we are seeing more and more residents come to us for assistance," said Vikram Swarup, Executive Director of Legal Aid DC.

"Every resident should be able to access legal services

that help them stay in their home, put food on the table, or keep their family safe. Unfortunately, these cuts are just one piece of a larger budget that is balanced on the backs of low-income Black and Brown residents. Legal Aid DC has dramatically expanded its services to our neighbors over the last year, and the mayor's proposed cuts each year jeopardize the significant

progress we've made in closing the access to justice gap."

Past Truancy Initiatives

The Office of the Attorney General's approach to truancy has emphasized alternative responses to prosecution. However, insufficient information from schools and logistical barriers have hindered the effectiveness of these efforts in addressing truancy rates

among Black and minority students.

Several stakeholders suggest solutions and alternative approaches, like prioritizing community-based interventions, including mentorship programs, mental health support services, and restorative justice initiatives, may offer more effective and equitable solutions to addressing youth-related challenges.

AARON, from Page 2

collection to the Museum in 2010, with many artifacts now on loan to various exhibitions, including the one at the Atlanta History Center.

The U.S. Postal Service announced that it will issue

a commemorative Forever stamp to celebrate Aaron's life and career further. The stamp art will feature a digital painting of Aaron as a member of the Braves, with the selvage showcasing him watching the ball he

had just hit for his record-breaking 715th home run on April 8, 1974.

USPS said in a statement, "The selvage showcases a digital painting of Aaron watching the ball he had just hit for his record-breaking 715th home run on April 8, 1974."



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New study explores potential positive benefits of raising the minimum wage

(Newswise) — According to a recent study on US tax data, most independent businesses can shoulder the added costs of higher minimum wages with new revenues, making only minor employment adjustments. The study, conducted by Nirupama Rao, Sanford R. Robertson Assistant Professor of Business Administration, and co-author Max Risch from Carnegie Mellon, draws on the universe of U.S. tax returns to exam-

ine the impacts of minimum wages, debunks concerns that small businesses are hit hard by minimum wage increases. Still, the research reveals a bigger impact on the restaurant industry, where some small, less productive restaurants close while higher minimum wages raise worker retention rates at bigger, more productive restaurants—and even raise profits at those surviving businesses. “For policymakers weigh-

ing tools for redistribution, our results show clearly that minimum wages do little harm to independent firms and even benefit some owners while meaningfully increasing both the earnings and employment of young and low-earning workers,” said Rao. “Of course, these gains to workers and owners are financed by consumers, who appear fairly inelastic in their overall demand for the goods and services furnished by independent busi-

nesses affected by minimum wage policies.”

Rao and Risch were able to examine revenue, employment, profits, and more following minimum wage increases in six states—thanks to panel data they built that match the universe of U.S. tax returns of independent businesses to the individual income tax returns of each of their workers and owners over

See WAGE, Page 13

RELIEF, from Page 8

White House officials say that the newly unveiled plans build upon these efforts and are expected to provide relief to over 30 million borrowers, combined with previous actions taken by the administration. One of the central aims of the proposals is to address the disproportionate debt burden borne by communities of color, mainly Black and Latino borrowers.

Statistics reveal stark racial disparities within

the student loan system. Black and Latino borrowers, who are more likely to take on student loans to afford a college education, often find themselves saddled with higher levels of debt compared to their white counterparts.

According to a White House Fact Sheet, 20 years after enrolling in college, the typical Black borrower from the 1995–96 school year still owed a staggering 95% of their original debt.

FEDERAL, from Page 1

However, administration officials said the new rules mean that any such effort would likely encounter legal challenges, given the detailed explanations required for regulatory changes. The new rule “cannot be erased by a technical, HR process, which [Trump] sought to do,” Shriver stated. He added that the majority of the 2.2

million federal employees nationwide are “our friends and neighbors” who don’t have political agendas.

A crucial component of the Trump-backed and conservative Heritage Foundation’s extensive playbook, dubbed Project 2025, involves plans to scrutinize and terminate tens of thousands of federal employees whom they deem not loyal to Trump and replace them

with loyalists. The GOP frontrunner, Trump, has vowed to run America as a dictatorship if he’s elected. Having already engaged in the Jan. 6 insurrection that led to the deaths of five law enforcement officers, Trump’s cultish followers have vowed more destruction if the would-be despot loses to Biden again.

With a favorable Supreme Court, and many others willing to do his bidding, Trump has thumbed

his nose at twice being found responsible for sexually assaulting a woman, whom a judge ordered him to pay nearly \$90 million in damages to. He’s consistently tested the limits of gag orders in his criminal cases, where he’s facing 88 felony counts that could land him an 800-plus year prison sentence, and Trump has been ordered to pay nearly \$500 million after a judge determined that he committed massive busi-

ness fraud.

Meanwhile, Biden called the new rules essential to safeguarding the independence and integrity of the civil service and ensuring that government agencies remain focused on serving the interests of the American people, free from partisan influence.

“Day in and day out, career civil servants provide the expertise and continuity necessary for our democracy to function,” the

president asserted. “They provide Americans with lifesaving and life-changing services and put opportunity within reach for millions. Since taking office, I have worked to strengthen, empower, and rebuild our career workforce. This rule is a step toward combating corruption and partisan interference to ensure civil servants are able to focus on the most important task at hand: delivering for the American people.”

MISSING, from Page 6

sions cases.

“It’s not a new issue,” Omeasoo said. “It’s been going on for a long time – too long – and I think the media is just now kind of catching wind of it.”

Omeasoo’s mentor, UM Associate Professor of Anthropology Meradeth Snow, finds inspiration in Omeasoo’s dedication and hard work.

“I have such high hopes for Haley,” said Snow, who co-chairs UM’s anthropology department. “I know she is going to be a mouthpiece for communities that need and deserve that, and I hope her work not only will bring more attention to this epidemic, but that she is able to build a bridge between the forensic world and the tribes.”

There are many factors that feed into the high rate of MMIP in Montana and elsewhere in the nation.

Poverty, domestic abuse and other social problems are prevalent on many reservations. Sarah Deer, a University of Kansas researcher, said Native women also are more likely to be trafficked in the sex industry.

There also is a lack of law enforcement resources on many reservations.

The Blackfeet reservation has a tribal police force of about 18 officers to cover a territory larger than the state of Delaware, according to the Missoulian. Depending on vacations and other scheduling factors, there can sometimes be just two officers to cover the entire 1.5-million-acre reservation.

Tribal police also lack full investigative powers in the most serious missing persons cases.

Only federal authorities can investigate and prose-

cute major felonies on most Native American reservations, including murder and manslaughter. In addition, tribal police only have a limited ability to investigate non-Natives for certain crimes, and on some reservations, non-Natives now outnumber Natives.

Ivan MacDonald, a documentary filmmaker and member of the Blackfeet Tribe, said both the tribal police and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which handles initial federal investigations on missing persons cases, are understaffed. In some instances, he said, by the time federal investigators get involved, the trail has gone cold and evidence is scant or missing.

Specialized DNA kit

To process her DNA samples, Omeasoo uses a special kit from Qiagen, a European genetic science company. The Verogen ForenSeq Kintelligence Kit is designed to look for DNA

markers that show how closely people are related to one another.

The kit also avoids using any DNA markers linked to health status, such as genes for breast cancer or hereditary diseases.

That’s important, Omeasoo said, because of the distrust many Native American tribes have toward the misuse of DNA. In the 1990s, scientists collected blood samples from the Havasupai Tribe in Arizona for a study on Type 2 diabetes. Tribal members later discovered the samples had been used for research on schizophrenia and other subjects the tribe had not consented to, and they sued the University of Arizona, which eventually led to a return of all blood samples to the tribe.

The suspicion that Native Americans have about DNA was apparent when Omeasoo began asking tribes to let her col-

lect DNA samples for her original plan, which was to create DNA databases for each tribe in Montana. The Blackfeet so far are the only tribe that has agreed to a DNA database.

The Qiagen kit, which looks for 10,230 familial DNA markers, “makes sense for [tribal identifications] because it removes the kinds of risks that have been seen in the past,” said Kameran Wong, Qiagen’s senior manager of marketing communications.

The Qiagen kit employs the same approach that criminal investigators have used to identify killers by linking their DNA to those of relatives, such as in the Golden State Killer case in California.

Omeasoo wouldn’t use the technique to find criminal suspects, but to find relatives of a victim whose unidentified remains have been discovered.

She also has developed

other skills that could help in MMIP cases. For her master’s thesis, Omeasoo examined CT scans of facial injuries to people who had been assaulted or killed. In particular, she looked for fractures on the left side of the face, because most assailants are right-handed.

It’s a signature injury that occurs in intimate partner violence and shows up more frequently in women, Omeasoo said. Her work could help investigators determine if intimate partner violence had occurred.

For Omeasoo herself, her work is all about making connections. She wants to connect tribal groups to the remains of their ancestors, and she wants to connect families of missing relatives to the people they are searching for so desperately.

“Where I’m from,” she said, “we’re all related somehow.”

Congressional Black Caucus releases plan to build Black wealth in America

Recently, Congressional Black Caucus Chairman Steven Horsford (NV-04) released a plan to build generational Black wealth in America.

The plan, which outlines the core tenets of the CBC's Black Wealth and Prosperity Agenda that will be rolled out over the next several months, was drafted alongside the co-chairs of the CBC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Task Force, Congresswoman Joyce Beatty (OH-03) and Congressman Glenn Ivey (MD-04).

The plan, grounded in the policy recommendations of the Black Economic Alliance (BEA) Foundation's "Policy Agenda to Advance Black Work, Wages, and Wealth," highlights the stark Black-white wealth gap in the United States, which has persisted into the 21st century with the

typical per capita wealth of white Americans being \$284,310, compared to only \$44,100 for Black Americans.

The plan further notes specific policy areas where existing barriers have prevented progress and outlines the holistic approach to closing the wealth divide in America.

The core tenets of the agenda are housing, entrepreneurship, employment,

tax fairness and equity, and safeguarding the democratic process through the protection of voting rights.

Through the creation of legislation within these tenets and supporting already existing legislation that touches on these goals, this agenda will have a profound impact on creating opportunities, building long-term generational wealth in Black communities, and closing the Black-

white wealth gap.

"Over the next several months, the CBC will engage in a coordinated effort where our members will create new legislation within the areas of housing, entrepreneurship, employment, tax fairness and equity, and safeguarding the democratic process through the protection of voting rights," said CBC Chairman Steven Horsford

(NV-04).

"The CBC is introducing the Black Wealth Agenda -- a day one agenda for the next Congress -- focused on Black economic wealth creation to implement when we have a Democratic House Majority, with Democrats holding the gavels on committees, and Hakeem Jeffries as Speaker of the House of Representatives."

WAGE, from Page 12

a 10-year period. The data compare firms and workers in the states that raised their minimum wages in 2014 to those in states that didn't.

The bottom line for workers: Higher wage floors ultimately raise the earnings of low-income workers, and young workers are

most likely to be impacted by the policies by thousands of dollars annually. Further, on average, these workers are no less likely to be employed following the minimum wage increases.

Minimum wage hikes also affect hiring and retention, shuffling the types of

workers employed in the restaurant sector and by different firms. Wage-floor increases boost worker retention as well as reduce hiring. The net impact is a modest reduction of roughly one worker per firm with the cuts nearly wholly concentrated among part-time teenage workers. These small hiring declines among

some restaurants are offset by other firms.

On the firm side, the average independent business in industries such as restaurants and retail is able to accommodate the minimum wage increases through higher revenues. Among restaurants, where low-earning workers make up about 16% of variable

costs as opposed to just 6% of production costs among retailers, wage hikes cause some less productive small restaurants to close.

It's that strong, adverse effect on some small firms that helps explain opposition to minimum wage increases among some small business owners, the researchers say. But they add

that at least when it comes to minimum wage increases of the size states adopted in 2014, policymakers "need not worry about a tradeoff between redistribution and job losses or swaths of distressed independent businesses."

This article was originally published in Michigan News.

FILM, from Page 9

much deeper than that.

Wingard's direction settles on the spectacle of the over-sized fights, but none are truly astonishing. The only reason anyone's heart will beat fast is because the loud soundtrack (Erik Aadahl) tends to make up for what is not visually impressive. Also, some of the fights take place on dazzling international locations, from the Pyramids to the beaches of Rio de Janeiro. Pour on the fanciful geographical locations, action, pummeling, bites, body slams and a little deep freeze wizardly and hope for the best.

Fala Chen as Iwi Queen has a majesty about her that gives the film some moments of dignity. Hottle displays an innocence that is beguiling. When Mikael meets an abrupt ending viewers will giggle.

That's a sign that Ferns did his job as the aggressive bully. Steven's interpretation of Tanner remains steadfast throughout. Cool, collected and high on life. While Henry's interpretation of Bernie seems too buffoonish.

The glue in the cast is

Hall. The first time she appears on the screen you wonder, "Who is she?" Your mind searches through your memory banks. Neighbor? My kid's teacher? Star of a TV show?

Hall has that every woman quality that makes her feel familiar even though you don't know her. That's what made Julia Roberts a star back in the day. That quality will give Hall a long career.

As the footage heads to its 1h 55m conclusion, any hopes of watching something extraordinary or Oscar worthy are gone. Any dreams of fresh material, which would make this fifth film in the MonsterVerse a standout, are dashed against the rocks of Queensland Australia, where the movie was shot.

Ordinary direction, shallow writing and a production team that can't make anything look, sound or feel distinguished bury what could have been good. It's possible the little TV screen will be more forgiving than the big movie house screen.

Maybe the bromance between the reptile Godzilla

and primate King Kong was a mistake. Maybe audiences will leave theaters invigorated but wondering,

"Where's the beef?"

Visit Film Critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownInk.com.



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It Was A Fool's Game And I Lost

By Dr. James L. Snyder

When it comes to games, I am not a good player. I lose more times than I win, and I can't remember the last time I won.

My paternal grandfather's favorite holiday of the year was April Fools' Day. He often would spend the whole year developing a prank for family and friends.

He had a construction company, and I'm not sure how many employees he had, but every one of them was the subject of some prank during their time with him.

Some pranks were so bad I can't mention them today.

Through the years, I have tried unsuccessfully

to prank The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. One of these days, cross my fingers, I will come up with a prank that works.

A week before April Fools' Day, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage asked me a rather silly question. "When was the last time you had an Apple Fritter?"

I was very suspicious of this question because I'm not allowed to bring them into our house, at least if she knows about it.

I was thinking that when she asked me this question, she was suspicious that I had been eating an Apple Fritter behind her back.

Being old has a great deal of benefits to it so I told her, "Oh, my dear. I

can't remember eating an Apple Fritter lately."

Looking at me rather strangely and with some air of disbelief, she said, "I was just thinking that maybe this April Fools' Day would be a good time for you to have an Apple Fritter."

I smiled at her, thinking she was trying to set me up for something.

"Well, it would be very nice."

With a twinkle in her eye that I couldn't explain, she said, "How would you feel if I got you an Apple Fritter for April Fools' Day?"

She has tricked me so many times that I'm not quite sure if this was a trick on her part or if she was having some "buyer's remorse" about not allowing

me to eat an Apple Fritter in the house.

With a pleasant smile, I replied, "I would feel very good about an Apple Fritter on April Fools' Day."

At the time, I did not know she was setting me up. I didn't think she could do that to me and I would not notice it. After all, I'm the one who tries to prank her every chance I get.

With a smile like I've never seen before, she replied, "Maybe I'll do that for you for April Fools' Day." With a laugh, she turned around and walked away.

I didn't know if I should be happy or suspicious at the time.

I went on with my week as normal and was busy

with a few projects. I forgot about the Apple Fritter because I assumed she was just pranking me. I did not expect an Apple Fritter on April Fools' Day. I did, however, think about going out and getting one for myself behind her back.

It was a busy week because we were preparing for Easter Sunday. Usually, our family gets together for dinner on Easter, so there was a lot of work in preparation for the family gathering.

During dinner, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said something rather strange. I pretended not to hear, but she said something to our oldest daughter, "What do you think about having an Ap-

ple Fritter on April Fools' Day?"

I had no idea why she asked that question. She was pretending to say it behind my back but did it in such a way that I could hear it without knowing that she knew I was listening.

Like a good husband, I pretended not to hear and just looked the other way.

Several times during our family get-together, she mentioned the word "Apple Fritter." There was no substance to what she was talking about; she just mentioned the word. I knew there was no chance of her getting me an Apple Fritter for April Fools' Day. I knew she was trying to play

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POLL, from Page 4

have sought care from one of these types of alternative care sites, at 64% vs. 55%.

- Women were more likely than men to have gone to an alternative site for care in the last two years, at 63% vs. 57%.

- Older adults who live in urban or suburban areas with populations over 50,000 were more likely than those in less-populated

areas to have gone to an alternative site for care, at 62% vs 52%.

- 61% of those who said they have a primary care provider said they visited an urgent care clinic, retail clinic or other alternative site in the past two years. The majority (64%) had let that regular provider know they had gone to an alternative site.

- Asked to compare the two, 43% of those who had gone to an alternative site for care said the alternative site was more convenient than their usual provider. But 52% said the quality of care was better at their usual provider's clinic, and 67% said they felt more connection to their provider at their usual clinic.

- Cost does not seem to be a main driver for seeking care at a non-traditional

site, with only 9% of alternative site users citing it as a reason. And 19% of those who had gone to an alternate care site said their alternative site was better on cost. Also, 23% of those who said they weren't likely to go to an alternative site for care in the next two years said that they were concerned about cost or

lack of insurance coverage for such care.

- 43% of those who haven't gotten care at an alternative care site in the past two years say they are likely to do so in the next two years.

The poll report is based on findings from a nationally representative survey conducted by NORC at the

University of Chicago for IHPI and administered online and via phone in July and August 2023 among 2,657 adults aged 50 to 80. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect the U.S. population. Read past National Poll on Healthy Aging reports and about the poll methodology.

KAINE, from Page 2

several years— journeyed along the 1,228-mile Virginia Nature Triathlon. He hiked the 559 miles of the Appalachian Trail that cross Virginia from Harpers Ferry to the Tennessee border; biked 321 miles along the crest of the Virginia Blue Ridge on the beautiful parkways built during the Great Depression to create jobs and give everyday people on the East Coast an accessible place to vacation; and canoed the entire James River—348 miles from its headwaters in the Allegheny Mountains to its entrance into the Chesapeake Bay. Along the way, Kaine reflected on the events that have shaped

both his life and the world around him, sharing his deep love for the natural world and the importance of preserving it for future generations in a fascinating memoir that blends adventure, reflection, and political insight.

"I didn't know when I set out on my Virginia Nature Triathlon that by the time I finished, I'd be a juror in two impeachment trials, in the Capitol when it was attacked on January 6, experience a global pandemic, and witness the racial justice protests that resulted from the murder of George Floyd. The events of the world were weighty," said Kaine "Being out in nature

gave me a way to reflect on and process them. I hope everyone who reads "Walk Ride Paddle" gains insight and inspiration from Virginia's great outdoors and will fight to preserve our country's natural beauty."

"Walk Ride Paddle" is not only a captivating memoir of one man's physical journey through the Virginia wilderness—but it is also a unique and ultimately optimistic perspective on these pivotal moments in history, offering inspiration, wisdom, and hope.

"Walk Ride Paddle" is available now in hardcover, eBook, and audiobook with Kaine narrating. You can order in your preferred format today at: walkridepaddle.com

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Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow



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There are two days in every week about which we should not worry about, two days which should be kept free from any fear and apprehension.

One of these days is YESTERDAY with its mistakes and cares, its faults and blunders, its aches and pains. YESTERDAY has passed forever beyond our control, there is nothing we can do about it, no matter



how we try!

All the money in the world cannot bring back YESTERDAY. We cannot undo a single act we performed; we cannot erase a single word we said. YES-

TERDAY is gone forever.

The other day we should not worry about is TOMORROW with its possible adversities, its burdens, its large promises and poor performances. TO-

MORROW is also beyond our immediate control.

TOMORROW'S sun will rise, either in splendor or behind a mask of clouds—but it will rise. Until it does, we have no

stake in TOMORROW, for it is as yet unborn. Also, it's not promised to you.

Now this leaves only one day—TODAY—any man or woman can fight the battles of just one day, it's only 24 hours. It is only when you and I add the burdens of those two awful eternities—YESTERDAY and TOMORROW that we break down.

It is not the experience of TODAY that drives men mad—it is remorse or

bitterness for something that happened YESTERDAY and the dread of what

TOMORROW may bring. Let us, therefore, live but one day at a time! Author Unknown

Thought for the Week. "Mahatma Gandhi once wrote that there were seven sins in "The World" they are, 1) Wealth without work. 2) Pleasure without conscience. 3) Knowledge without character. 4) Commerce without morality. 5) Science without humanity. 6) Worship without sacrifice, and, 7) Politics without principle.

(Editor's Note: This column originally ran in April 2019.)

← SNYDER, from Page 14

with my expectations.

All that day I couldn't help but think of Apple Fritters and how much I would really like one but I knew it was a prank, so I had no expectations.

The more I thought about it, the more I began to think that maybe, just maybe, she wanted me not to believe she was going to give me an Apple Fritter and then, at the last moment, surprise

me and give me an Apple Fritter.

That breakfast on April Fools' Day, she brought me a little box, and on the top of the box, it said, "This is your Apple Fritter for April Fools' Day."


I must say I was a little surprised when she handed me that little box. I smiled, opened the lid, and saw written at the bottom of the box was, "April Fool."


Sometimes what you do to others comes back on you. I was reading my bible and came across this verse. "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31).

That got me thinking about some of my actions. Would I want others to do to me what I sometimes do to them? Maybe I should begin doing good to people and see how that works. I think I'll start with the Gra-

cious Mistress of the Parsonage.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail jamesnyder51@gmail.com, website www.jamesnyderministries.com.

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NDG Book Review: Books for Poetry Month by various authors

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

On your hands, you got lots of time.

You can make a song, you can make a rhyme. Make a long story, make a short one, write what you like, make it simple and fun. Writing poetry uses your imagination: you play with words, paint a picture, there's no intimidation. Creating poetry can be a breeze, or just reach for and read books exactly like these...

Picture books for the littles are a great way to introduce your 3-to-7-year-old to poetry because simple stories lend themselves to gentle rhymes and lessons. **"See You on the Other**



Side" by Rachel Montez Minor, illustrated by Mariyah Rahman (Crown, \$18.99) is a rhyming book about love and loss, but it's not as sad as you might think.

In this book, several young children learn that losing someone beloved is not a forever thing, that its

very sad but it's not scary because their loved one is always just a thought away. Young readers who've recently experienced the death of a parent, grandparent, sibling, or friend will be comforted by the rhyme here, but don't dismiss the words as kiddishness: adults who've recently lost

a loved one will find helpful, comforting words here, too.

Flitting from here to there and back again, author Alice Notley moves through phases of her life, locations, and her diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer in her latest poetry collection, **"Being Reflected Upon"** (Penguin, \$20.00). From 2000 to 2017, Notley lived in Paris where she completed her wrestle with breast cancer. That, and her life abroad, are reflected in the poetry here; she also takes readers on a poetic journey on other adventures and to other places she lived and visited. This book has a random feel that entices readers to skip around and dive

in anywhere. Fans of Notley will appreciate her new-age approach to her works; new fans will enjoy digging into her thoughts and visions through poems. Bonus: at least one of the poems may make you laugh.

If you're a reader who's willing to look into the future, **"Colorfast"** by Rose McLarney (Penguin, \$20.00) will be a book you'll return to time and again. This, the author's fourth collection, is filled with vivid poems of graying and fading, but also of bright shades, small things, women's lives yesterday and today, McLarney's Southern childhood, and the things she recalls about her childhood. The poems

inside this book are like sitting on a front porch on a wooden rocking chair: they're comfortable, inviting, and they tell a story that readers will love discovering.

If these books aren't enough, or if you're looking for something different, silly, or classic, then head to your favorite bookstore or library. The ladies and gentlemen there will help you figure out exactly what you need, and they can introduce you to the kind of poetry that makes you laugh, makes you cry, entices a child, inspires you, gives you comfort, or makes you want to write your own poems. Isn't it time to enjoy a rhyme?



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