

Sheriff Neal, other Bowie County officials take oath of office

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Neal, who has served as the county's chief deputy for the last seven years, was encouraged to run for the county's top law enforcement spot by James Prince, the longtime sheriff who retired Thursday.

Neal has served in law enforcement for 31 years.

Others sworn in include constables Russell Crawford and Chad Ford. Also, Precinct 1 Commissioner Sammy Stone and Precinct 3 Commissioner James Strain took their oaths of office during the ceremony.

Bowie County reports additional COVID-19 death

Ballot Bill 1

DJB

3/31/21(WedPM/ThursAM)

Arkansas lawmakers have advanced a bill that would put restrictions on absentee voting in the state. Members of the House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committee today (Wed) approved House Bill 1715 by Republican Rep. Mark Lowery of Maumelle. He said the bill would lower the number of absentee ballot applications a person could obtain without opening them up to allegations of voter fraud.

News01

0:23

“...uh, vote absentee.”

The bill would also prohibit county clerks from sending unsolicited applications for absentee ballots to registered voters or from displaying a printable application online. It also requires the signature on an absentee ballot application to match the signature on a person’s original voter registration. The bill passed on a voice vote and now goes to the full House for approval.

TEXARKANA - With its fleet of firefighting vehicles down by four under repair at once, Texarkana, Texas, Fire Department has borrowed a reserve pumper truck from its Arkansas-side counterpart.

A variety of mechanical issues including brake problems and a malfunctioning motor reduced TTFD's fleet of eight trucks - five front-line vehicles and three reserve - to four that are operable, prompting a call for help to the Texarkana, Arkansas, Fire Department, Texas-side Fire Chief Eric Schlotter said.

TAFD was happy to help by lending one of its reserve vehicles, Arkansas-side Fire Chief David Fletcher said. TAFD is left with two of its normal three reserve trucks, one of which itself is in need of work.

TTFD is fully operational, with all five fire stations staffed and ready to respond to emergencies, and residents will not see a difference in service, Schlotter said. "It's just a different vehicle, and most people don't really pay attention to what color red the fire truck is that shows up," he said.

Schlotter said. "We certainly don't like it when we're in this situation, but it is nice that we have partners, and it's why we maintain those agreements with all those partners. Our strength is a collective one. We're stronger because we have these partnerships with these other cities and agencies."

TEXARKANA, Texas — Texarkana Texas Police are warning residents of a dangerous situation involving drugs laced with something deadly.

A 25-year-old woman died of an overdose early Wednesday after taking what police believe to be an opioid drug that was laced with something else, said Texarkana Texas Police Spokesman Shawn Vaughn. A man who was with the woman also overdosed and is reportedly in bad condition.

Later in the day, a 20-year-old woman also suffered an apparent overdose. Her condition was not known.

"They are buying street drugs, thinking it's something like oxycontin and it has been laced with something. We are not sure what yet and won't know until the toxicology screens come back," Vaughn said.

Police warn anyone who has purchased any street-level narcotics recently to not take them.

"Unfortunately, there's no way to look at it and know if it's the real deal or something that someone has doctored up. It's a very scary situation. Anyone buying street drugs needs to be aware of what they are potentially getting," Vaughn said.

Alcohol Bill 1

DJB/MEH 3/30/2021(TuesPM/WedAM)

A bill that would allow direct shipments of wine to consumers has failed in an Arkansas legislative committee. Members of the Senate City, County and Local Affairs committee today (Tues) chose not to make a motion to vote on Senate Bill 546, sponsored by Republican Sen. Trent Garner of El Dorado. Stan Hastings with Moon Distributors spoke against the bill, saying out-of-state wineries would not have to pay the same gallonage taxes as in-state wholesalers and winemakers.

News01

0:16

“...think it’s fair.”

The same committee also passed a bill expanding sales of beer with high alcohol content to grocery and convenience stores. That piece of legislation, Senate Bill 592, now goes to the full Senate for a vote.

Alcohol Bill 2

DJB/MEH 3/30/2021(TuesPM/WedAM)

Arkansas lawmakers have advanced a bill that would allow grocery and convenience stores to sell beer with a high alcohol content. Members of the Senate City, County and Local Affairs committee today (Monday) passed Senate Bill 592, sponsored by Republican Sen. Bill Sample of Hot Springs. Numerous people spoke against the bill, including Sherwood liquor store owner John Crow, who said it would cost him revenue.

News02

0:21

“...in the door.”

Crow says liquor stores are more highly regulated than grocery or convenience stores, and therefore should have the exclusive right to sell beer with as high as 12% alcohol by weight. The bill now goes to the full Senate for a vote. Lawmakers in the committee also failed to act on a bill that would have allowed vineyards to ship wine directly to consumers in the state.

For the People FE

MEH/DJB

3/30 (Wed AM – 6:45 & 8:45)

As the U.S. Senate considers a major overhaul of federal election law, Arkansas Republicans are speaking out against it. KUAR's Michael Hibblen has details:

News15 3:450

SOC

The sweeping legislation known as the For the People Act aims to standardize voting laws, which vary greatly from state to state. But Republican Senator Tom Cotton calls it a major overreach.

Cotton A “We shouldn't federalize our elections. We have state legislators and our Secretary of State and our attorney general and other state officials to pass our laws here in Arkansas. We have county officials who administer our elections. This is a bill that is in search of a problem to solve. And what it really wants to solve is that it's state and local officials who run our elections as opposed to Democrats in Washington.”

But Democrats argue the change is needed to combat widespread Republican efforts to restrict voting on the state level. So far this year, more than 200 bills have been filed in legislatures across the country reducing things like access to early voting or voting by mail. But Republican Secretary of State John Thurston, who oversees elections in Arkansas, says the federal proposal by Democrats would create chaos.

“This bill would eliminate... their assigned precinct.”

The legislation was approved by the U.S. House earlier this month, where all Republicans voted against it. But passage in the Senate looks less likely because of a 50-50 split between parties and some Democrats, like Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia, expressing opposition. Senator John Boozman of Arkansas says he doesn't expect there to be the 60 votes needed to overcome a filibuster unless, what he called “unfair” rule changes were made.

Boozman A “This might be the one where they try to do away with the filibuster or they say, well this is a very special bill, we're gonna do away with it for this bill but not for the others so, it remains to be seen, but it is so, so very important. It's over 800 pages. You're right Tom, I think a lot of people, simply with the magnitude of this bill, don't understand what's in it.

If the bill is passed by Congress, Attorney General and candidate for governor Leslie Rutledge promises a legal challenge in court.

“We stand ready... potential for fraud.”

The legislation was also criticized for taking away states' ability to draw their own congressional districts.

But Democratic Party of Arkansas Chairman Michael John Gray said some things need to be federalized. In an interview with Talk Business & Politics he pointed to interstate highway law, currency and uniform commerce law and likewise said standardized voting laws are needed. MH

Mask Mandate 1

AB/MEH

03/30/21(TuesPM & WedAM)

Arkansas' mask mandate has been lifted, while all people 16 and older are now eligible to be vaccinated for COVID-19. Governor Asa Hutchinson made the announcements today (Tues), which are effective immediately. He noted a continued decline in active cases and hospitalizations, but said masks are still encouraged as the state has seen an increase in new variants.

News11

0:24

“...honor those decisions.”

Education Secretary Johnny Key said schools will have to decide with local boards whether they want to continue, modify, or eliminate the mask policies.

Mask Mandate 2

AB/MEH

03/30/21(TuesPM & WedAM)

All Arkansans aged 16 and older are now eligible to get vaccinated for COVID-19. At his weekly press briefing on the pandemic today (Tues), Governor Asa Hutchinson also announced the state mask mandate has been lifted. He noted expanding eligibility for vaccines will present some challenges.

News12

0:24

“...that we can.”

Health Secretary Dr Jose Romero said it's vital for people who have had their first Pfizer or Moderna vaccine to get their second shot or they won't be fully immunized. He said this will help keep hospitalizations and active cases down, especially as the state has reported to see an increase in new variants.

Lawmakers have approved a bill that would allow Arkansas to ignore any and all federal laws regarding firearms. Members of the Senate City, County and Local Affairs committee today (Mon) passed Senate Bill 298, sponsored by Republican Sen. Gary Stubblefield of Branch. He argued the bill is necessary to combat the federal government's overreach interfering with Second Amendment rights.

News03

0:20

"...represent our people."

The bill would make attempting to enforce federal gun laws punishable by a fine of up to \$1-thousand dollars. Independent Sen. Jim Hendren of Gravette said enacting such a law could cause the state to lose federal funding for schools, roads and other infrastructure.

News04

0:18

"...pay that price?"

The bill passed on a voice vote following more than an hour of debate. It now goes to the full Senate for a vote.

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TEXARKANA, Texas — A former Texarkana Independent School District teacher's aide accused of sexual misconduct with three male high school students in 2019 is scheduled for a jury trial next month.

Ashlyn Faye Bell, 24, appeared Monday morning with District Judge John Tidwell. Tidwell noted that he has about five cases pending in his court that involve allegations of sexual misconduct by educators and Bell's is the first of them expected to go to trial.

Jury selection in the case is set for April 26 at the Bowie County courthouse in New Boston.

Bell is currently under two separate indictments for improper relationship between educator and student with two different 17-year-old boys for conduct which allegedly occurred in the fall of 2019. A third indictment lists two counts of sexual assault of a child involving a 16-year-old boy she allegedly molested in the same time period.

Bell was employed from Aug. 5, 2019, to May 22 as an instructional aide, according to a previous interview with a school district official.

Each of the four charges facing Bell are punishable by two to 20 years in prison. Bell is currently free on bonds totaling \$150,000.

TEXARKANA — The Texas Eagle line that runs from Chicago to San Antonio, with a stop in Texarkana, will soon resume a seven-day-a-week schedule, according to Marc Magliari, Amtrak public relations spokesman. The new schedule begins May 24. "The route was reduced to three days a week in October of last year," he said. "But as we emerge from COVID and with increased demand coming as well as increased funding, this has warranted the Texas Eagle return to its seven-day-a-week schedule."

COVID-19 relief funds will also allow Amtrak to bring back 1,200 furloughed employees, whose services will be secured at least partially through 2022.

"Offering daily long distance service represents a vital step in our road to recovery," said Amtrak CEO Bill Flynn. "Recognizing the immense value of our employees, we'd like to thank Congress for enabling service restoration and helping us recall furloughed employees."

Texas Eagle is one of 12 routes that will return to a daily schedule, the company announced recently.

Kristi Bennett has been named as the new Texarkana, Arkansas, police chief.

City Manager Dr. Kenny Haskin announced Bennett's appointment Monday afternoon.

Bennett is the department's first woman chief of police and first new chief in 31 years.

Bennett holds a master's degree from Southern Arkansas University and has served as interim chief since September 1, 2020. Prior to her appointment as interim chief, she served with TAPD in several significant roles since she joined the department in 2005.

Bennett said she plans to continue to establish excellent working relationships with regional law enforcement agencies, city government officials, and local community members.

Bennett said TAPD is a highly motivated agency and with the continued effort toward change, there are several things that can be done to also make it a highly competitive one that will encourage employee retention and strengthen morale.



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COVID cases down in Miller County

TEXARKANA, Ark. — COVID-19 cases in Miller County have reduced in recent weeks but it is unknown if that will change when the mask mandate is relaxed, officials say.

Governor Asa Hutchinson has a proposal to remove/relax the mask mandate by the end of March. Hutchinson's goal to lift the mandate is conditioned on a COVID-19 testing positivity rate below 10% or fewer than 750 hospitalizations statewide.

"At this time, Miller County has a positivity rate between 2% and 5%, but it is unknown if that will change when the mask mandate is relaxed by the state," said Joe Bennett, director of the Miller County Office of Emergency Management.

In Miller County, Emergency Management has tracked the positivity rate based on data received from the Arkansas Department of Health and various local testing facilities, Bennett said, "We've tracked new positive cases since this time last year and saw our peak in January and February at about 175-190 every ten days. For March, the cases have reduced to about 35-40 every 15 days."

"Wearing a mask should be a personal choice, and certainly portions of the population are more vulnerable than others to the COVID virus, but people have been educated on improving hygiene, social distancing and vaccinations which has proven to reduce the positivity rate," Bennett said.

There are several opportunities to receive the vaccine for people within the Phase 1A, 1B and 1C in Miller County. Clinics have been offered but the volume of people arriving for a vaccine is relatively low. Lansdell Family Clinic has opened its drive-through vaccination clinic at 3809 E. 9th. For more information call 870-330-4385.

Appointments for veterans can be made by calling 318-221-8411.

The Arkansas Department of Health shows vaccination rates in Miller County are still low and can be attributed to several factors including many Arkansans have responded to a Texas vaccination clinic which does not track Miller County residents, Bennett said.

Large-scale vaccinations continue Saturday at St. Michael

TEXARKANA, Texas — CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System on Saturday will conduct a large-scale coronavirus vaccination clinic, the latest to administer more than 1,000 doses in a day.

Vaccinations will be available by appointment only to those eligible. The vaccine is free to the public.

Those now eligible for vaccination include front-line health care workers; residents at long-term care facilities; people age 50 or older; people age 16 or older with a health condition that increases risk of severe COVID19 illness; and those who work in a school serving early learning, pre-kindergarten or kindergarten through 12th grade or who work as a licensed childcare provider, including teachers, staff and bus drivers.

Beginning Monday, all adults will be eligible for coronavirus vaccination in Texas. People age 80 or older will continue to be prioritized.

CHRISTUS caregivers, Bowie County and city of Texarkana, Texas, first responders and volunteers from the Emergency Operations Center, Texas A&M University-Texarkana and Texarkana College will operate the clinic.

St. Michael asks those with appointments to adhere to the following directions.

Arrive no more than 15 minutes prior to appointment time. There is an ample supply of vaccine for all individuals who have scheduled appointments.

Those arriving before scheduled appointment times contribute to traffic backups and will be rerouted to facilitate a more efficient vaccination schedule.

Individuals should remain in their vehicles until they are directed to park in the designated lot in front of the vaccine clinic. Vaccine participants should not exit their vehicles prior to parking in the clinic lot and walk to the clinic entrance. Walkers will be instructed to return to their vehicles.

Enter the hospital campus at the intersection of Cowhorn Creek and St. Michael Loop or from St. Michael Drive. Follow signage and directions from traffic volunteers.

Perot proposals to be presented Thursday

TEXARKANA, Texas — The three applicants seeking to manage the Perot Theatre for the city of Texarkana, Texas, will give in-person presentations Thursday to the citizens' committee tasked with making a decisive recommendation.

The Texarkana Regional Arts and Humanities Council, which currently manages the historic downtown theater, the Texarkana Symphony Orchestra and the Ames, Iowa-based VenuWorks will present their case Thursday afternoon with the committee asking follow-up questions after each presentation.

Robby Robertson, the director of the city's parks and recreation department who's overseeing the Perot request for proposal process, said the city, along with the citizens' committee, will make a recommendation but the citizens' committee decision will be the deciding factor in awarding the job.

Dean Barry, Debby Sutton, Gail Eichler, Derrick McGary and Fred Norton are the five committee members. The presentations will not be open to the public, Robertson said, because the advisory committee does not make city policy.

"We want to protect the integrity of the RFP (Request For Proposal) process, and this is going to be at specific times where these vendors can come in. We've given them time slots. The committee has already seen their proposals, the written proposals," Robertson said.

Vendors can present as long as 30 minutes, if they wish, but the city recommends 15 to 20 minutes, Robertson said, with the remainder of each presenter's hour giving the committee a chance to ask questions.

Evaluation criteria are shown as part of a bid tab document available at the city's purchasing department webpage on the city website.

Evaluation criteria include: Experience & Qualification (30%); References (20%); Proposal (50%) with sub-categories of General Management Approach (10%), Vision for Programming & Growth (10%), Equipment Operation & Maintenance (5%), Marketing & Promotion (5%), Operations & Parking (5%), Financial Stability and Accounting Approach (5%), Staffing (5%) and Compliance with Instructions (5%).

CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System will host another COVID-19 Vaccination Hub Clinic on Saturday.

Per guidance from the Texas Department of State Health Services, people 50 and older are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. In addition, individuals in Phase 1A and 1B categories and those who work in a school serving early learning, pre-K, or K-12 grade levels or work as a licensed childcare provider are also eligible. This includes teachers, staff, and bus drivers.

This round of Pfizer first-dose vaccinations is also occurring by appointment only, according to a news release from CHRISTUS St. Michael. Walk-in and wait-list appointments are not available. To schedule an appointment visit vaccinate.christushealth.org.

When you visit vaccinate.christushealth.org, you will be asked to answer the questions in the yellow chatbox on the right of the screen to determine if you meet guidelines for receiving the vaccine. Individuals may also call the following dedicated phone line for information and registration for a vaccination appointment at this hub vaccination clinic: (877) 335-5746.

COVID-Mon RE MEH 3/22 (Mon PM & Tues AM)

Governor Asa Hutchinson says Arkansas is continuing to see the results of efforts to fight COVID-19. Today's (Mon) report from the Department of Health shows active cases down more than 500 compared to a week ago. There were five additional deaths, along with 52 new cases of people testing positive for the virus. Hospitalizations declined by eight from Sunday.

Governor's Race DBL – 1A & 1B DM/MEH 3/22 MonAM

The race to determine the next governor of Arkansas is taking shape. Republican candidate Leslie Rutledge, the state's current attorney general, emphasized her experience during an interview this weekend on Talk Business and Politics. She's running against a very high profile candidate, former White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. Rutledge suggested she has more real world experience.

NEWS20 0:14 "...every single day."

Sanders served under former President Trump, who still remains a popular figure among Republicans. Only one Democratic candidate, James Russell of Little Rock, has formally entered the governor's race. State party Chair Michael John Gray said Democrats plan to have a competitive primary.

NEWS21 0:13 "...Dermott or Dumas"

You can hear more from these interviews tonight just after 6 on KUAR.

KUAF Marshallese Maternity JF/DM 3/22 - HOLD

A professor at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Northwest Regional Campus is developing a maternity program designed to meet the unique needs of the Marshallese population. Jacqueline Froehlich, from partner station KUAF in Fayetteville has more on the new program.

News30 7:12 ABRUPT OUT "...on Nov. 3rd. I'm Jacqueline Froehlich."

The Arkansas Legislature has given final approval to a bill that would ban transgender girls and women from participating in school sports that align with their gender identity. It now goes to Governor Asa Hutchinson. The House today (Mon) approved the bill by a vote of 75-to-18. Supporters say it's intended to allow cisgender girls to play sports and not be at a "physical disadvantage" against transgender girls. Democratic Rep. Tippi McCullough of Little Rock spoke against the bill. She said allowing transgender girls to compete will not rob cisgender girls of opportunities.

NEWS06**0:19****"...you'll be recruited."**

Governor Hutchinson has not said whether he supports the measure. If signed into law, public schools, open enrollment charter schools, as well as public institutions of higher education would not be able to admit transgender girls or women to participate in girls or women's sports.

The United Way of Greater Texarkana announced the amount of money raised through its 2020-21 fundraising campaign at the annual recognition breakfast Friday morning, coming in at over \$710,000 and still counting.

With another \$12,000 expected to add onto that total, that would leave it just over \$10,000 short of last year's total of \$736,000, despite implications and canceled events because of COVID-19.

"As of last night, it was \$710,000, and now it's over \$710,000, with another \$12,000 in grants to be received," Campaign Chairperson Keith Cragg said. "That's phenomenal, considering last year's campaign total was about \$730,000. So, we're about \$10,000 off of the previous campaign, despite all of the challenges and all of the hurdles we had to overcome."

The top contributor was Cooper Tire and United Steel Workers 752L, adding \$130,654 to the mix. CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System and Rehabilitation came in second, contributing \$72,937.

TEXARKANA, Ark. — Efforts to dry out the Miller County Courthouse will be continuing for a few more days.

Miller County Judge's Office Administrative Assistant Carla Jenkins said drying operations could be completed sometime this week on the courthouse's third, second and first floors, along with the basement.

Presently, the county's traditional telephone numbers for its displaced government offices, should now all be reconnected to those offices, now operating temporarily in downtown Texarkana, Arkansas' Landmark Building — an office outlet located at the corner of the East Broad Street and North State Line Avenue intersection.

The county's Tax Assessor's Office, Treasurer's Office and Elections Administrative Office are located on the second floor, while the Tax Collectors's office is on the first floor and County Clerk's Office is in the basement.

Jenkins said she anticipates that once all five of the courthouse's floors, along with its basement, are dry, county officials will likely hold another meeting with the county's insurance claims adjusters regarding where the next step toward reopening the courthouse will go.

All five of the courthouse's floors, along with the basement, suffered severe water damage Feb. 20 after below-freezing winter temperatures caused water in the building's water pipe system to freeze and rupture the water lines.

Once the courthouse's full interior is dry, asbestos abatement procedures will eventually have to take place — at which time the courthouse will have to be completely closed off to everyone except abatement personnel.

Since last month's water pipe burst and subsequent interior courthouse flooding, asbestos has been found inside the courthouse's second-floor courtroom as well as in areas on the third floor and in the basement.

DE QUEEN, Ark. —A mass COVID-19 vaccination clinic is scheduled for 8 a.m. Saturday at the De Queen Health and Wellness Pharmacy, located at 1357 W. Collin Raye Drive.

The clinic has been set by the De Queen Health and Wellness Pharmacy and staff expect to receive around 2,000 vaccines for the clinic.

The doses will be distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis to those currently eligible to receive the vaccine.

Additional parking will be available at the nearby De Queen Church of Christ.

Police and other De Queen first responders will be on site to help with the flow of traffic. A shuttle service will also be provided for those who are mobility impaired and who park at the De Queen Church of Christ.

For more information on eligibility guidelines, visit www.healthy.arkansas.gov. The De Queen Health and Wellness Pharmacy can be contacted through its Facebook page or by calling (870) 642-2400.

TEXARKANA, Ark. — The victim of Wednesday's shooting on Locust Street has died from her injuries, according to police.

The suspect has been charged with first-degree murder.

On Wednesday, officers responded to a shooting in the 1000 block of Locust Street. The victim, Kayla Keatts, 20, of Texarkana, was transported to a local hospital in critical condition. Shortly before 8:00 pm Wednesday, Keatts died from her injuries, according to a news release from the Texarkana Arkansas Police Department.

The suspect, Jason Stewart Jr., 18, of Texarkana, Arkansas turned himself in to detectives late Wednesday. Stewart was booked into jail and his charges have been upgraded to murder in the first degree.

The incident is still under investigation.

In its Thursday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 264 new cases; 2,734 active cases; 245 hospitalized, which is down 15 from Wednesday; 47 on ventilators, which is down 7 from Wednesday; deaths added today, 8, for a total of 5,515; a total of 328,045 cases; 251,506 recoveries; PCR tests, 7,574; antigen tests, 1,165.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are: Washington, 32; Benton, 31; Pulaski, 27; Polk, 22; and Faulkner, 12.

Governor Hutchinson released the following statement on today's COVID-19 numbers:

“Vaccinations are making a huge difference in Arkansas. As the number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths continues to decrease, let's double down on our efforts to get vaccinated if you are in priorities 1-A, 1-B, or 1-C.”

A PROGRAMMING NOTE:

TODAY ON THE NEWS HOUR AT NOON WITH STEVE MITCHELL WILL CONTINUE HIS SERIES “COVID 19 ONE YEAR LATER”

HE TALKS WITH OFFICIALS, DOCTORS, FRONT LINE WORKERS, CLERGY AND MORE ABOUT THE PAST YEAR AND WHAT THEY FELT AT THE START OF THE PANDEMIC AND HOW THEY FEEL NOW.

STEVES GUEST ON THE NEWS HOUR TODAY AT NOON IS PATRICK CANNON PASTOR OF THE WALNUT CHURCH AS HE LOOKS BACK AT THE LAST YEAR. THAT’S TODAY AT NOON ON THE NEWS HOUR

TEXARKANA, Texas — CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System on Saturday will conduct a large-scale coronavirus vaccination clinic, the latest to administer more than 1,000 doses in a day.

Vaccinations will be available by appointment only to those eligible. The vaccine is free to the public.

Those now eligible for vaccination include front-line healthcare workers; residents at long-term care facilities; people age 50 or older; people age 16 or older with a health condition that increases risk of severe COVID19 illness; and those who work in a school serving early learning, pre-kindergarten or kindergarten through 12th grade or who work as a licensed childcare provider, including teachers, staff and bus drivers.

CHRISTUS caregivers, Bowie County and city of Texarkana, Texas, first responders and volunteers from the Emergency Operations Center, Texas A&M University-Texarkana and Texarkana College will operate the clinic.

St. Michael asks those with appointments to adhere to the following directions.

Arrive no more than 15 minutes prior to appointment time. There is an ample supply of vaccine for all individuals who have scheduled appointments.

Enter the hospital campus at the intersection of Cowhorn Creek and St. Michael Loop or from St. Michael Drive. Follow signage and directions from traffic volunteers.

Vaccine participants will exit the campus at the intersection of Galleria Oaks and Herman Joseph Drive after completing the vaccine process.

Only those being vaccinated may attend the clinic, except for those who need assistance. Those who cannot come alone to their appointment may bring one essential visitor.

Wear loose fitting clothes, for ease in accessing your shoulder to administer the vaccine. Masks are required. Please bring your own mask.

(To make a vaccination appointment, call 877-335-5746 or visit vaccinate.christushealth.org and click on the yellow chatbox on the right of the screen.)

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STEVES GUEST ON THE NEWS HOUR TODAY AT NOON IS OEM DIRECTOR ED SCHLOTTER AS HE LOOKS BACK AT THE LAST YEAR. THAT’S TODAY AT NOON ON THE NEWS HOUR

The Arkansas Legislature has passed a bill that would allow pharmacies to administer up to six months' worth of birth control for patients seeking it. The Senate today (Wed) gave final approval to House Bill 1069. It would allow pharmacists, after screening a patient to assess whether they've been seen by a primary-care provider in the previous six months, to dispense no more than six months' worth of birth control until the patient has been seen by a doctor.

The pharmacist must also provide the patient with a referral to a local healthcare provider. The pharmacist would not be allowed to refer a patient to an abortion provider.

Republican Sen. Missy Irvin of Mountain View was the only senator to speak against the bill. She pushed back against bill sponsor Sen. Breanne Davis' assertion the bill is "pro-life," and spoke about medical-related issues.

NEWS06**:25****"...pelvic exams"**

"My concern is the safety of the woman and making sure that you have the ability to get the screenings that you need for cervical cancers. And a lot of times young ladies, young women, that's the time when they go to see their primary care doctor, or provider or nurse or OBGYN, that's when they actually get screenings for cervical cancers and their pelvic exams.

Speaking for the bill was Republican Sen. Trent Garner of El Dorado. He shared his own experiences about difficulty in securing an appointment to receive birth control for his wife, saying the process took months.

NEWS07**:19****"...their family"**

"When I hear about a bill like this where you can go to the pharmacist, they can give you the list of information about what that drug will do and then within six months you do have to see a physician or go to that requirement, it seems like a no brainer plan for people who have a busy life, who want to go out there and want to make the right decisions for their family," Garner said.

The bill passed by a vote of 30-to-2, with two senators voting present. It now goes to Gov. Asa Hutchinson.

Senate Judiciary 1

DJB/MEH

3/17/2021(WedPM/ThursAM)

Arkansas lawmakers have advanced a bill that would reduce the charge of possession of certain drug paraphernalia from a felony to a misdemeanor. Members of the Senate Judiciary committee today (Wed) approved House Bill 1604, sponsored by Republican Rep. Jimmy Gazaway of Paragould. Sebastian County prosecuting attorney Daniel Shue explained another facet of the bill to the committee.

News01

0:18

“...with one count.”

The bill would make possessing paraphernalia related to methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine or fentanyl use a misdemeanor on a first offense, and a felony on subsequent offenses. That would not apply to equipment used to transport or manufacture drugs. The bill would also consider possession of paraphernalia with drug residue as one felony crime on a person’s criminal record, as opposed to two charges. The bill passed on a voice vote and now heads to the full Senate.

Senate Judiciary 2

DJB/MEH

3/17/2021(WedPM/ThursAM)

An Arkansas legislative panel has approved a bill that would increase the penalties for fleeing from police in a motor vehicle. The Senate Judiciary Committee voted in favor of Senate Bill 307, sponsored by Independent Sen. Jim Hendren of Gravette. Major Forrest Marks with the Arkansas State Police said the bill seeks to reduce the number of police chases, which he says has increased dramatically over the past few years.

News02

0:26

“...bystanders are hurt.”

The bill would increase the charge for fleeing in a vehicle from a class A misdemeanor to a class D felony. It would also require someone charged with fleeing to serve at least 30 days in jail, compared to the two days currently required. The bill now heads to the Senate floor for a vote.

Texarkana Ark Police officers were dispatched to the 1000 block of Locust Street Wednesday after noon where they found a 20-year-old female, who had been shot. The victim was identified as by police as Kayla Keatts of Texarkana, TX.. The victim was transported to a local hospital where she remains in critical condition.

Dispatch issued information to officers of a suspect was last seen leaving on foot wearing a black shirt and black shorts and having dreadlocks for a hairstyle. Detectives are actively searching for 18 year old Jason Stewart Jr, of Texarkana, AR. Stewart is wanted for Domestic Battery in the First Degree.

The incident is still under investigation. If anyone has information on the whereabouts of the suspect, please contact the Criminal Investigation Division at (903)-798-3154 or Crime Stoppers at 903-793-STOP (903-793-7867).

TEXARKANA, Texas - A Pasadena, Texas woman was killed here in an early morning crash involving a Nash police vehicle, a police spokesman said.

Clarissa Arriaga, 45, of Pasadena, Texas, was pronounced dead at the scene of the accident at Summerhill and New Boston roads. The crash happened about 3:53 a.m. Wednesday, according to Texarkana, Texas Police Department spokesman Shawn Vaughn.

She was a passenger in 2012 Cadillac Escalade driven by her husband, Francisco Arriaga, 47. He, along with their two children (boy 21 and girl 15) were transported to Wadley with non-life threatening injuries.

Arriaga was apparently northbound on Summerhill and failed to stop at a flashing red traffic light and was struck on the passenger side of his vehicle by a Nash PD Officer Sostenes Sanchez, who was westbound on New Boston Road, according to Vaughn.

The Escalade was flipped on its top during the crash.

Sanchez was transported to CHRISTUS St. Michael with non-life threatening injuries. He was driving a 2011 Crown Victoria.

The crash remains under investigation. Everyone was wearing seatbelts.

TEXARKANA — Texarkana Water Utilities customers who, because of a December 2020 cyberattack, have not recently been billed are expected to receive statements within the next two or three weeks, and they should be prepared to see balances owed for multiple months.

Coming bills could reflect up to 120 days' water use as TWU staff works to repair damage to its computer systems caused by the attack, Customer Service Manager Tricia Briggs said. Customers who pay through automatic bank drafts can expect those full balances to be withdrawn from their accounts.

A ransomware attack on TWU, which handles information technology services for both the cities of Texarkana, Texas, and Texarkana, Arkansas, as well as Bowie County, Texas, was discovered Dec. 6. Multiple governmental bodies, courts and law enforcement agencies were affected, with large amounts of data destroyed or rendered inaccessible.

The attack destroyed TWU payment and other account data dating back to Oct. 20, Briggs said.

Customers can make payments through the TWU website, twu.txkusa.org, though there have been some problems with the site displaying inaccurate account balances.

TWU is not charging any late-payment penalties or disconnecting service as the problems are resolved, and customers who will have trouble paying their balances can make special arrangements.

Heavy volume to TWU's customer service phone lines has resulted in wait times of up to an hour. Another option is to email customerservice@txkusa.org and wait for a reply or include a phone number for a return call.

Copyright Texarkana gazette

TEXARKANA — The Texarkana airport is expected to receive about \$1 million in stimulus funds from President Joe Biden's relief bill.

"We are expected to receive about \$1 million to use for operating costs and maintenance budget," said Airport Director Paul Mehrlich.

The relief bill is providing about \$9 billion in all to airports across the nation along with \$14 billion for airlines.

A good portion of the money that the Texarkana airport receives will be used for protecting employee payroll, Mehrlich said.

"In the event of something happening, our employees will be safe," he said.

The Texarkana airport received similar amounts in the last two rounds of stimulus payments, Mehrlich said. The funds will also be used to restore a management position that the airport has not had in several years.

"We hope to hire an airport operations manager. That is a position that we have not had in about three years."

The second portion of federal funding will include \$642,000. It will be given to the airport to help cover the construction costs of the new terminal.

Mehrlich said these funds are usually 90% from the federal government but will be 100% this year.

A groundbreaking for the terminal will be Saturday, June 12.

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson announced Wednesday that vaccine eligibility will expand to include everyone in category 1-C, effective immediately.

Hutchinson said during his weekly COVID-19 update that the eligibility expansion is due in part to the White House's emphasis on making all Americans to be eligible by May 1. The administration has committed to increasing production, Hutchinson said, though the governor reminded Arkansans that vaccines are still limited at this time.

The eligibility now includes Arkansans ages 16 to 64 with health conditions that increase their risk to covid-19, as well as essential workers in areas that include energy, finance, food service, law, and media.

"There has been some slowdown in parts of the state on the demand side, particularly in rural areas, which we have to overcome" Hutchinson said.

As of Tuesday afternoon, 265,115 Arkansans are partially vaccinated and 303,823 or 10% of the state's population are fully vaccinated, he noted.

Of Arkansans 65 years or older, 55.3% have received at least one dose of the vaccine and 27.2% of the age group are considered fully vaccinated, Hutchinson said.

A PROGRAMMING NOTE:

TODAY ON THE NEWS HOUR AT NOON WITH STEVE MITCHELL WILL CONTINUE HIS SERIES “COVID 19 ONE YEAR LATER”

HE TALKS WITH OFFICIALS, DOCTORS, FRONT LINE WORKERS, CLERGY AND MORE ABOUT THE PAST YEAR AND WHAT THEY FELT AT THE START OF THE PANDEMIC AND HOW THEY FEEL NOW.

STEVES GUEST ON THE NEWS HOUR TODAY AT NOON IS DR BENJAMINE NEUMAN VIROLOGIST AS HE LOOKS BACK AT THE LAST YEAR. THAT’S TODAY AT NOON ON THE NEWS HOUR

Two juveniles have been arrested in Texarkana, Texas for allegedly taking an SUV from family and crashing the vehicle into the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant on New Boston Road.

A 12-year-old girl and a 14-year-old girl were both charged with unauthorized use of a vehicle and taken to JDC, according to Texarkana Texas Police. No one was injured in the incident. TTPD received the call about 3 a.m. Monday regarding a major crash where a vehicle had hit the restaurant building. The vehicle was being driven by a 12-year-old girl when she lost control as she tried to turn off of Robison Road while going too fast, according to police. She and her 14-year-old friend had taken the vehicle without the grandmother's knowledge to allegedly go riding around with some boys, according to police.

They had allegedly dropped off the boys a few minutes before the crash.

The building was not seriously damaged.

In its Monday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 117 new cases; 2,863 active cases; 250 hospitalized, which is up 7 from Sunday; 58 on ventilators, which is up 3 from Sunday; deaths added today, 7, for a total of 5,481; a total of 327,060 cases; 250,717 recoveries; PCR tests, 2,313; antigen tests, 138.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are Benton, 15; Crawford, 13; Pulaski, 12; Washington, 11; and Lonoke, 8.

Governor Hutchinson released the following statement on today's COVID-19 numbers:

“Today's number of active cases is the lowest in Arkansas since early June. We are making great progress in decreasing our new case numbers, but we must continue to get vaccinated. The best thing each of us can do is get the vaccine when it's our turn.”

Asa FTN 1

DJB

3/15/2021(MonAM)

With a new coronavirus relief bill passed by congress, Gov. Asa Hutchinson says there are pluses and minuses to the \$1.9 trillion dollar relief package. Hutchinson spoke on Face The Nation on C-B-S Sunday, saying he took issue with the bill's size, and its requirement to distribute funds to states based on unemployment rates, rather than population.

News01

0:29

“...states have flexibility.”

Arkansas is set to receive about \$4 billion dollars from the new American Rescue Plan. Hutchinson said that's an increase from what the state saw from the original CARES Act bailout package. The governor also voiced his support for ending the statewide face mask mandate, which could end at the end of the month.

Asa FTN 2

DJB

3/15/2021(MonAM)

Gov. Asa Hutchinson is continuing to call for Arkansans to get vaccinated against the coronavirus when they become eligible. Speaking on CBS's Face The Nation yesterday (Sun) Hutchinson said there has been some hesitancy, especially among young Republicans according to a recent poll by CBS.

News02

0:28

“...those numbers changing.”

Currently about 300-thousand Arkansans are fully vaccinated against the coronavirus. Hutchinson also commented on New York governor Andrew Cuomo, saying the investigation by that state's attorney general into sexual assault allegations against him should continue, but stopping short of saying he should resign from office.

Hutchinson-Vaccine

DM/MEH

3/15 (MonAM)

Arkansans over the age of 16 with medical conditions that put them at high risk for contracting COVID-19 are expected to be eligible for the vaccine next month. In an interview aired this weekend on Arkansas PBS, Governor Asa Hutchinson said he is optimistic about a significant increase in the number of vaccine doses in the coming weeks.

NEWS22 0:20 “...that could happen.”

On the program “Arkansas Week,” Hutchinson credited President Biden’s use of the Defense Production Act as a factor in getting more doses available in the state. According to the Arkansas Department of Health, nearly 300,000 Arkansans have been fully vaccinated since December.

Hutchinson-Marijuana

DM/MEH

3/15 (MonAM)

The Arkansas Senate is considering a bill which could reduce arrests for possessing small amounts of marijuana for recreational purposes. The legislation would make the maximum penalty for possessing less than an ounce of marijuana a fine of \$200 dollars. But in an interview with Arkansas PBS, Governor Asa Hutchinson spoke against the proposal.

NEWS23 0:17 “...that is beneficial.”

Hutchinson, who led the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration two decades ago, made his comments on the program “Arkansas Week.” Under current Arkansas law, those without a prescription for marijuana who are prosecuted for possession of less than 4 ounces could face up to a year in jail and a fine of more than \$2,000 dollars. Supporters of decriminalization say the move would reduce overcrowding in prisons and have a positive economic impact on the state through taxation. Arkansas voters approved the use and sale of medical marijuana in 2016.

The Pandemic Has Increased Our Stress Levels, And It's Affecting Our Physical Health

[Rhitu Chatterjee](#)

A new survey by the American Psychological Association finds that Americans have been more stressed out in the past year than in previous years, and it's also taking a toll on our physical health.

Bowie County, Texas, recorded four deaths because of COVID-19 from Monday to Thursday, bringing the county's death toll to 191, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Active cases in the county fell from 521 to 488 in that time, while total confirmed cases increased from 4,608 to 4,621. There have been an estimated 6,018 recoveries from the disease in Bowie County.

Elsewhere in Northeast Texas, Red River County's case count increased from 398 to 399 and Titus County's from 2,670 to 2,675, according to TDSHS. Morris County's case count held at 567, and Cass County's was adjusted downward from 1,131 to 1,130.

In Southwest Arkansas, Miller County's total cases went up from 2,585 to 2,591 Monday to Thursday, while active cases fell from 22 to 18, according to the Arkansas Department of Health. COVID-19 fatalities in the county were adjusted downward from 22 to 18, and there have been 2,553 recoveries.

Lafayette County's total case count rose from 373 to 375 in that time, Nevada County's from 639 to 640, Pike County's from 754 to 756, Little River County's from 870 to 875, Howard County's from 1,024 to 1,027, Hempstead County's from 1,435 to 1,438 and Sevier County's from 1,763 to 1,767, according to ADH.

In Northwest Louisiana from Monday to Thursday, Caddo Parish's case count increased from 24,862 to 24,907 and Bossier Parish's from 13,084 to 13,112, according to the Louisiana Department of Health.

Statewide, Arkansas reported 256,519 confirmed cases and 5,410 deaths on Thursday, Louisiana reported 435,935 cases and 9,828 deaths, and Texas reported 2,333,796 cases and 45,106 deaths.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday reported 29,052,862 cases so far in the U.S., with a national death toll of 527,726.

In its Thursday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 340 new cases; 3,144 active cases; 278 hospitalized, which is down 23 from Wednesday; 67 on ventilators, which is down 5 from Wednesday; deaths added today, 28, for a total of 5,410; a total of 326,040 cases; 249,873 recoveries; PCR tests, 7,316; antigen tests, 1,040.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are Benton, 39; Washington, 38; Pulaski, 33; Faulkner, 22; and Craighead, 17.

Governor Hutchinson released the following statement on today's COVID-19 numbers:

“As we remember the one-year anniversary of the first COVID-19 case in Arkansas today, we look back at the challenges we've overcome. The past year has been difficult for each of us, but the vaccine gives us hope in our fight against this virus.”

The Collins Senior Center located at 3000 Texas Boulevard will reopen on Monday, March 15th after almost a year of being closed due to COVID-19. The senior center is open Monday-Friday from 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

The center will open with safety precautions in place to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep patrons safe and healthy. No meals will be served at the Collins Senior Center at this time, but the Grab and Go Meals program will continue at the Southwest Center (3222 W. 7th St.) from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

A new membership program has also started in 2021, so patrons should bring a state-issued identification to register.

call at 903-793-5545 for more information.

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Texas is aiming to protect those at the greatest risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19 by expanding vaccination on March 15 to people who are 50 to 64 years of age.

More than 93% of the Texas fatalities directly caused by the coronavirus have been in people 50 and older, with those ages 50 to 64 accounting for 20% of all fatalities. By including this next most vulnerable group, Texas will continue to reduce the number of people who are hospitalized and die from the disease across all races, ethnicities and occupations.

More than half of all Texas seniors have gotten at least one dose of vaccine, and 30% are now fully vaccinated. The number of COVID-19 positive patients in Texas hospitals has fallen by two-thirds from its peak in mid-January. There are about 5 million Texans between the ages of 50 and 64; more than 1 million of them are already vaccinated.

The state's COVID-19 vaccination program began with Phase 1A in December with health care workers and long-term care facility residents and staff. Later that month, Phase 1B began to vaccinate people 65 and older and others with medical conditions that put them at a greater hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Texas last week added school and child care workers to the eligible population following a directive from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Cathy Harrison
County Judge

Office of Emergency Management
Miller County, Arkansas
1007 Jefferson Texarkana, AR. 71854

office (870)772-2591 Fax (870)772-2592
www.millercountyar.org



Joe Bennett
Director

"Building Resilient Communities"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID vaccination clinics continue to be scheduled in Miller County. College Hill Drug and Miller County Emergency Management has worked with city and community leaders in Miller County to schedule vaccination clinics throughout March.

List of Vaccination Clinics include:

Thursday, March 11th from 9a-4p at 928 Laurel St. Church of the Living God

Thursday, March 18th from 9a-4p at 106 E. Main St, Fouke Community Center

Friday, March 19th from 9a-3p at 189 Miller County 201, Doddridge Community Center

Wednesday, March 24th 7am at the Cooper Tire Union Hall (Cooper Tire employees)

This is the two dose Moderna vaccine and people interested in signing up for the March 11th event can do so at <https://www.collegehilldrug.com/covid-19-vaccinations> There, you can select to schedule a time for the vaccine and also complete the registration paperwork which needs to be brought with you. For people who can't get online, they can go to College Hill Drug and request a registration packet. For those interested in signing up for future clinics in Fouke or Doddridge, an appointment scheduler will be added a few days prior to those clinics. College Hill Drug requests everyone bring their identification and insurance card. The clinics will accommodate people with mobility problems, so some will be able to get their vaccination without getting out of the car if needed.

Miller County Judge Cathy Harrison encourages everyone within the current phases to take advantage of the opportunity provided by College Hill Drug and Emergency Management, "Miller County experienced a downward trend of positive infections lately and we need to continue this progression until the virus no longer affects our citizens" said Judge Harrison.

In its Wednesday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 317 new cases; 3,227 active cases; 301 hospitalized, which is down 16 from Tuesday; 72 on ventilators, which is up 1 from Tuesday; deaths added today, 25, for a total of 5,382; a total of 325,700 cases; 249,594 recoveries; PCR tests, 6,599; antigen tests, 941.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are Pualski, 43; Benton, 33; Washington, 27; Union, 18; and Faulkner, 17.

Governor Hutchinson released the following statement on today's COVID-19 numbers:

“Today's report shows fewer new cases and higher testing than last week. Of the 25 new deaths reported today, 16 of them are late reporting from January. The team at the Department of Health and I are continually monitoring vaccine distribution to ensure we can administer doses as quickly and efficiently as possible.”

School Safety 1

DJB/MEH

3/9/2021(TuesPM/WedAM)

Arkansas lawmakers have advanced a bill that would require enhanced training for school resource officers. Members of the House Education Committee approved House Bill 1510 sponsored by Democratic Rep. Jamie Scott in a meeting today (Tues). Dr. Cheryl May, director of the University of Arkansas System Criminal Justice Institute, spoke in favor of the bill, saying the training would include de-escalation techniques, cultural competency and education on trauma-informed response.

News01

0:19

“...in most of them.”

Under the bill, officers would be required to take a 40-hour basic training course, as well as a 16-hour refresher course every five years. The training would be free to school districts, funded through an existing appropriation from the state legislature. The bill now goes to the House for a vote.

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson on Tuesday signed a bill into law that would ban nearly all abortions in the state. Senate Bill 6 makes no exceptions for rape or incest, and only lists a few medical exceptions.

While abortion rights advocates are promising a legal fight, backers of the bill legislative backers have said they hope the case will eventually be considered by the U.S. Supreme Court and that the additional of more conservative justices in recent years will lead to an overturning of the landmark Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion.

"I will sign SB6 because of overwhelming legislative support and my sincere and long-held pro-life convictions. SB6 is in contradiction of binding precedents of the U.S. Supreme Court, but it is the intent of the legislation to set the stage for the Supreme Court overturning current case law," Hutchinson said in a statement. "I would have preferred the legislation to include the exceptions for rape and incest, which has been my consistent view, and such exceptions would increase the chances for a review by the U.S. Supreme Court."

The Arkansas House gave final approval to the bill last Wednesday, and meeting with reporters that afternoon, Hutchinson expressed similar sentiments, but would not say then what he would eventually do.

The law says anyone convicted of performing or attempting to perform an abortion could be fined by to \$100,000, up to 10 years in prison, or both a fine and prison sentence.

"Governor Hutchinson: we'll see you in court," promised ACLU of Arkansas Executive Director Holly Dickson in a statement Tuesday afternoon. "This extreme abortion ban is cruel and unconstitutional and it will have accomplished nothing but cause stress for patients, while ignoring the pressing challenges Arkansans face. Abortion is legal in all 50 states, including Arkansas, and we'll fight as long as it takes to keep it that way. "

In recent years, the Arkansas Legislature has steadily passed bills adding more restrictions to abortions or requiring those undergoing the procedure to take part in an ultrasound.

During debate over this bill, several lawmakers expressed reservations about the lack of rape or incest exemptions. An amendment to add those exemptions by Sen. Jim Hendren, I-Gravette, was rejected.

Lori Williams, director of Little Rock Family Planning Services, a clinic that provides abortions, said in a statement that she and her staff would not be intimidated.

"This outright ban is just the latest and most outrageous effort to block our patients from accessing vital reproductive health care. Our physicians, staff and our patients will not be intimidated by these attacks. Our doors remain open – and we will always fight to ensure that they stay that way. Our patients will continue to receive the compassionate care they need."

Host Copy

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention this week issued a first set of guidelines for Americans who've been fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

From member station KUAF, in Fayetteville Jacqueline Froelich reports.

Webs

<https://achi.net/>

[https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/pdf/ADH_COVID-19_Vaccination_Plan_\(7\).pdf](https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/pdf/ADH_COVID-19_Vaccination_Plan_(7).pdf)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>

Joseph Thompson, MD, is president and CEO of the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement, which conducts evidence-based research, public issue advocacy, and collaborative program development to resolve emerging and legacy health issues.

During the pandemic center experts have been hard at work mapping and interpreting the spread of COVID-19 in Arkansas, which has infected more than 324 thousand people. Over 5300 Arkansans have died.

The center's also educating the public, professionals and policy makers on COVID-19 vaccinations.

T1: "Fully vaccinated means you've had both doses ... so a completed series plus two weeks."

COVID-19 vaccines have been doled out in state-mandated phases in Arkansas.

Group 1A were the first to get shots -- health care workers, long term care facility staff and residents, medical and health care providers, and EMS first responders.

In late February, Arkansans age 65 and older qualified under phase 1B, as well as educators, and food, agricultural, manufacturing, grocery store, public transit, law enforcement, and postal workers.

Phase 1C, not yet deployed, will provide vaccines to everyone age 16 to 65, and remaining essential workers.

Marshallese Medicaid

JF/KUAF/AB

TuesPM(5:44)

Late last month, an Arkansas legislative review committee approved an administrative rule amending the state's Medicaid policy manual to include qualifying legally present Pacific Island migrants. Jacqueline Froelich from our partner station KUAF in Fayetteville has more:

News13

3:29

“...I'm Jacqueline Froelich.”

Obit-Gene Roebuck VR,<

JR/BT

3/9/21 (Tue AM)

A former Northeast Arkansas lawmaker and military veteran has passed away. KASU's Brandon Tabor has this memorial for Gene Roebuck.

NEWS

1:02

SOC

Former Arkansas State Senator Gene Roebuck of Jonesboro has passed away...this information from a source close to the family. He was 85.

Roebuck served two terms in the Arkansas Senate District 29 in 1997 and 1999.

He served as chair of the Legislative Audit and held numerous Vice Chair positions, including Vice Chair of the Education Committee, Children and Youth Committee, and Public Transportation, Aging, and Legislative Affairs Committees.

Roebuck was a candidate for the Arkansas State House of Representatives, District 74 in 2002 and a candidate for the Arkansas State Senate District 21 seat in 2014.

He was an officer in the US Army in 1959 and had served as an Air Force Lieutenant Colonel. (/:49 [Obit-Gene Roebuck VR edit ends here])

He coached for Jonesboro High School from 1960-to-1966.

Roebuck owned an insurance agency for many years.was also the founding member of the Grace Baptist Church in Jonesboro.

**NOTE: The shorter edited version ends with SOC and it lasts 49 sec.

In its Tuesday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 432 new cases; 3,461 active cases; 317 hospitalized, which is down 21 from Monday; 71 on ventilators, which is down 3 from Monday; deaths added today, 14, for a total of 5,357; a total of 325,383 cases; 249,229 recoveries; PCR tests, 2,535; antigen tests, 1,720.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are Washington, 62; Benton, 47; Garland, 42; Faulkner, 28; and Pulaski, 26.

Governor Hutchinson released the following statement on today's COVID-19 numbers:

“We continue to see a decrease in active cases and hospitalizations compared to last week. Also, an additional 104,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered since last Tuesday. Our continued mitigation efforts, including vaccination, masking, and social distancing, will get us closer to the end of this pandemic.”

TISD, in cooperation with the Bowie County Health Clinic, will be hosting a TISD Employee On-Site COVID Vaccination Clinic TODAY -, March 10.

THE event will be from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. and again from 3:00 - 5:30 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center, 3941 Summerhill Road.

A Statement from the district Tuesday afternoon said “We have been working toward this for sometime now. Given that Texas finally made teachers a priority for vaccination last Thursday, we are pleased that we can offer one so quickly to our staff. I anticipate that we will have close to 300-500 staff members attend.”

Also The City of Texarkana, Texas is partnering with the Texas National Guard to provide COVID-19 vaccines to individuals 65 and up as part of Governor Abbott’s Save our Seniors Initiative.

500 Moderna vaccines will be given out Thursday, March 11, 2021 to individuals 65 and older. To register, call (903) 798-3250 between 7:00 a.m. – 6:00p.m.

Arkansas lawmakers have advanced a bill that would remove the collective bargaining rights for unions representing state employees. Members of the Senate Public Health, Welfare and Labor committee today (Mon) passed Senate Bill 341, sponsored by Republican Sen. Bob Ballinger of Berryville. Arkansas Education Association Executive Director Tracey Ann Nelson spoke against the bill.

News04

0:23

“...respected, not attacked.”

Nelson and a representative from the AFL-CIO said removing collective bargaining would also jeopardize federal funding that certain industries receive, including money related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ballinger responded by saying numerous groups have been exempted from his bill, including firefighters and transit workers.

News05

0:16

“...on an individual basis.”

The bill passed on a voice vote and now goes to the Senate floor. Committee members also advanced a bill that would allow for a return to in-person visitation at nursing homes and hospitals in Arkansas.

A bill that clarifies when the state of Arkansas must return a public school district to local control failed to advance in committee on Monday. By a vote of 4-4 the Senate Education Committee failed to pass Senate Bill 314. According to the legislation, any public school that has been under the authority of the State Board of Education for five years and also has democratically elected a public-school district board of directors must return to local control. The bill also gave permission for districts to return to local control in a period fewer than five years.

Democratic Senator Joyce Elliott of Little Rock sponsored the legislation. She spoke specifically on the Little Rock School District, which has been under state control for over six years. During that time she said district schools were closed “due to efficiency” while charter schools were opening.

NEWS09**:26****“...with the district”**

Education Secretary Johnny Key said the Arkansas Department of Education was against the bill and spoke on the state’s authority to maintain control over a district beyond a five year period.

NEWS10**:15****“...that five years”**

Though the bill did not pass, it could be brought up again in front of the committee.

Fully Vaccinated – 1 DM/MEH

3/8 MonPM/TueAM

Arkansans who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 no longer have to be quarantined after exposure to an infected person. The new guidelines, released today (Monday) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, apply to those who have waited at least two weeks since receiving the final dose of any of the approved vaccines. Dr. Jennifer Dillaha (dill-uh-hay), director of immunizations for the Arkansas Department of Health, says this will potentially cause fewer COVID-related disruptions in workplaces.

NEWS20 0:19 “...and get tested.”

Authorities are continuing to recommend that everyone wear masks and physically distance while in public. **(OPTIONAL)** Today (Mon), Governor Asa Hutchinson expanded the number of Arkansans eligible to receive the vaccine by 180-thousand to include everyone in Phase 1-B of the state’s plan. That includes grocery store and public transit employees, postal workers, those in the food and agriculture industry, and people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Fully Vaccinated – 2 DM/MEH

3/8 MonPM/TueAM

Fully vaccinated Arkansans can now safely gather in small groups without masks or social distancing, according to new guidelines released today (Monday) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Jennifer Dillaha (dill-uh-hay), director of immunizations for the Arkansas Department of Health, says this will likely have a positive impact on the mental health of those who have been isolated from family and friends.

NEWS21 0:18 “...or spiritual needs.”

The new guidelines, which apply two weeks after someone has received the last, or only dose of an approved vaccine, recommends that fully vaccinated people continue to avoid medium or large gatherings, like concerts, sporting events or weddings. The CDC also recommends that everyone wear masks and physically distance while in public.

Health

Many Health Experts Believe Worst Of The Coronavirus May Be Over

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Heard on **Morning Edition**

Rob Stein TALKS WITH RACHEL MARTIN

Could the end of the pandemic be in sight in the U.S.? A growing number of the nation's leading experts say: Yes, with some caveats. Variables could still derail the recovery.

TEXARKANA, Texas — Bowie County recorded two additional deaths because of COVID-19 from Thursday to Monday, bringing the county's death toll to 187, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Active coronavirus cases also increased in Bowie County, moving from 511 to 521 in that time. Cumulative confirmed cases rose from 4,585 to 4,608, and there have been an estimated 5,967 recoveries in the county.

Elsewhere in Northeast Texas, Red River County's case count increased from 396 to 398, Morris County's from 565 to 567, Cass County's from 1,130 to 1,131 and Titus County's from 2,667 to 2,670, according to TDSHS.

In Southwest Arkansas, Miller County's total cases went up from 2, 580 to 2,585 Thursday to Monday, while active cases fell from 25 to 22, according to the Arkansas Department of Health. COVID-19 fatalities in the county fell from 25 to 22, and there have been 2,544 recoveries.

Lafayette County's total case count rose from 371 to 373 in that time, Nevada County's from 638 to 639, Pike County's from 750 to 754, Little River County's from 865 to 870, Howard County's from 1,019 to 1,024, Hempstead County's from 1,434 to 1,435 and Sevier County's from 1,759 to 1,763, according to ADH. In Northwest Louisiana from Thursday to Monday, Caddo Parish's case count increased from 24,795 to 24,862 and Bossier Parish's from 13,061 to 13,084, according to the Louisiana Department of Health.

Statewide, Arkansas reported 255,836 confirmed cases and 5,343 deaths on Monday, Louisiana reported 434,289 cases and 9,758 deaths, and Texas reported 2,322,728 cases and 44,483 deaths.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Monday reported 28,813,424 cases so far in the U.S., with a national death toll of 523,850.

TEXARKANA, Texas -- Opportunities Inc. invites everyone to kick off spring by staying healthy and active in their own backyard, while also supporting children and adults with developmental disabilities.

The Opportunities Inc. Paddle, Hike, Jog or Bike on May 15 is a unique virtual event developed for the safety of participants, volunteers, staff, partners and the community, according to a news release.

Participants take their pick from a 3+ mile hike, 10- to 15-mile bike ride or paddle at a local park, or jogging a 5K. All race packs include a custom race medal, shirt and race certificate.

The monies raised from the virtual race will be dedicated to funding the cost of a multisensory environment for children in the Early Intervention Day Treatment Program.

The virtual event is sponsored by Chick-fil-A Central Mall and The Sportsplex by Healthcare Express.

Visit the registration page at runsignup.com/Race/TX/AnyCityAnyState/oppincorgVirtual5k, or visit the event website at www.oppinc.org/virtual-race.

Governor Asa Hutchinson provided today's update on Arkansas's COVID-19 response.

In its Monday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 133 new cases; 3,593 active cases; 338 hospitalized, which is up 3 from Sunday; 74 on ventilators, which is up 9 from Sunday; deaths added today, 24, for a total of 5,343; a total of 324,951 cases; 248,853 recoveries; PCR tests, 2,345; antigen tests, 201.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are Washington, 19; Pulaski, 17; Benton, 13; Faulkner, 10; and Garland, 10.

Governor Hutchinson released the following statement on today's COVID-19 numbers:

“Today's COVID-19 report continues to show a trend in the right direction. 15 of the deaths in today's report are late reporting from either 2020 or January. With the opening of all of Phase 1-B, I hope we will see an increase in vaccine distribution this week.”

Women's Day TW MEH 3/8 (Mon)

Today (Mon) is International Women's Day. Michael Hibblen with KUAR in Little Rock has a look on one way it's being marked:

News15 3:48 “...I'm Michael Hibblen.”

(Script: The day is celebrated around the world, including here in Arkansas. One group marking this is the Arkansas chapter of the Girls Scouts. Most people only know them for selling Girl Scout cookies, but the organization also works to instill confidence in young girls to become future leaders.

Joining me to talk about this Dawn Prasifka (pruh-sif-kuh), CEO of Girl Scouts Diamonds which is the Arkansas council ...