

COVID-Thurs RE

MEH

4/29 (Thurs PM & Fri AM)

Arkansas reported nine deaths today (Thurs) from COVID-19. The Department of Health says eight deaths were confirmed to be from the virus, while the other was probable. There were 240 new cases of people testing positive for the virus, while the overall number of active cases rose by 53. In a statement, Governor Asa Hutchinson said the number of people getting vaccinated is down from the same day a week ago. He encouraged anyone needing assistance in getting a vaccine to visit the Department of Health's website.

CenterPoint RE

MEH/TB&P4/29 (Thurs PM & Fri AM)

CenterPoint Energy is selling its Arkansas and Oklahoma gas distribution assets for \$2.1 billion dollars. Summit Utilities today (Thurs) announced the acquisition, which – in Arkansas – will affect about 380-thousand residential customers and 48-thousand industrial customers. Talk Business & Politics reports Summit Utilities expanded into the region three years ago with the purchase of Fort Smith-based Arkansas Oklahoma Gas Corporation.

Championship Announcement RE

MEH

4/29 (Thurs PM & Fri AM)

Governor Asa Hutchinson is to join state tourism officials tomorrow (Fri) for an announcement regarding a collegiate national championship event that, according to a press release, will call Little Rock home for three years. The announcement is to take place at War Memorial Stadium.

Stabbings 1

MEH

4/29 (Thurs PM & Fri AM)

Little Rock police are warning that a serial attacker could be responsible for four random stabbings that left three people dead. Chief Keith Humphrey made the announcement today (Thurs) in a video posted to YouTube. He said a connection was made after two stabbings this month.

News15 0:15

“...in each case.”

Humphrey said all of the attacks took place in the Midtown area in the early morning hours between 1 and 4 a.m. A spokesman for the FBI said its behavioral analysis unit is providing assistance to police. Authorities are asking anyone with information to contact investigators.

Stabbings 2

MEH

4/29 (Thurs PM & Fri AM)

Little Rock police and the FBI are investigating the possibility that four recent stabbings may have been conducted by the same attacker. Three of the victims died from stab wounds, while the fourth, who was stabbed more than 15 times, survived. In an announcement posted today (Thurs) on YouTube, Little Rock Police Chief Keith Humphrey says investigators determined two stabbings this month were similar to attacks late last summer.

News16 0:16

“...were randomly attacked.”

A search is underway for a suspect, with authorities asking anyone with information to contact police. Humphrey said the serial attacks in Little Rock are not believed to be connected to incidents elsewhere in the state.

Texarkana Regional Airport passenger terminal groundbreaking set for June 12

TEXARKANA, Ark. — The groundbreaking for the \$34 million passenger terminal planned for Texarkana Regional Airport is set for 11 a.m. June 12.

Airport officials hope to have the project complete around 2024, said Paul Mehrlich, executive director of aviation.

Airport Authority Board members set the groundbreaking date and time at their meeting Thursday morning.

The new terminal has been in the planning stages for at least 15 years.

Once the terminal is complete, they will look at possibly extending the airport's primary runway from 6,000 feet to about 9,000 feet in length to accommodate commercial cargo flights in addition to existing commercial passenger flights.

Along with business cargo, airport officials are also looking at buying and developing 38 acres of nearby land to develop commercially to help support the air cargo industry.

[National Security](#)

In The Ransomware Battle, Cybercriminals Have The Upper Hand

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• • • April 29, 2021 5:01 AM ET
Heard on [Morning Edition](#)



[Greg Myre](#)

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3-Minute Listen

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Washington, D.C., Police Chief Robert Contee addresses reporters in January. The police department has acknowledged that its computer network has been breached by attackers seeking a ransom. Such attacks against local governments, hospitals and corporations have been rising sharply.

Bill O'Leary/AP

DEKALB, Texas — A Texarkana teen and a Broken Bow, Oklahoma teen were killed Monday night in a vehicle accident near the Texas and Oklahoma border on Highway 259.

Caden Jimenez, 18, of Texarkana and Brianna Patterson, 17, of Broken Bow both died at the scene, according to a preliminary fatality report from the Texas Department of Public Safety.

At 6:18 p.m. Monday, Texas Department of Public Safety Troopers were notified of a crash on U.S. Highway 259 about 13 miles north of DeKalb near the Texas/Oklahoma border. The preliminary investigation indicates a 1997 Toyota Celica driven by Jimenez was traveling southbound on US 259. Patterson was a passenger in the vehicle.

For an as yet undetermined reason, the Toyota passed a southbound 2015 Volvo Truck-Tractor that was towing a trailer, in the right shoulder. The Toyota lost control as it passed in front of the Volvo and was struck in the left side. The Toyota then crossed into the northbound lane where it was struck by a 2021 Volvo Truck-Tractor also towing a trailer.

The driver of the 2015 Volvo, Kedric Burns, 48, of Texarkana and the driver of the 2021 Volvo, Christopher Parks, 30, of Tyler, Texas were both treated and released, according to the report.

The crash remains under investigation.

COVID-Wed RE

MEH

4/28 (Wed PM & Thurs AM)

Arkansas saw a slight uptick today (Wed) in cases of COVID-19. The Department of Health says 291 people tested positive for the virus, while the overall number of active cases grew by 64. Governor Asa Hutchinson noted in a statement, both figures are below this time last week. There was also one death.

Arkansas' agricultural regulatory board has gotten hundreds of public comments both in support and against a proposed rule change for a controversial herbicide. KUAR's Daniel Breen explains.

News01

0:59

SOC

The Arkansas State Plant Board received nearly 500 public comments on a proposed change to rules governing dicamba, an herbicide that's used on genetically-modified cotton and soybeans. The chemical has been at the center of a heated debate in Arkansas for about six years, and has been subject to numerous rule changes and bans every year. The latest rule change would allow for a later cutoff date for spraying the chemical, June 30th for soybeans and July 30th for cotton. Many commenters against the rule change cited research that the chemical tends to vaporize at higher temperatures, allowing it to be carried by the wind and eventually cause damage to non-tolerant crops. About 300 people, many from farming communities in east Arkansas, wrote in favor of the measure, which farmers say would allow for better control of invasive weeds. Dicamba manufacturers BASF and Bayer also wrote in favor of the rule change, which will now go to the state legislature for approval. DJB KUAR News.

In its Wednesday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 291 new cases; 1,908 active cases; 165 hospitalized, which is up 8 from Tuesday; 27 on ventilators, which is up 1 from Tuesday; deaths added today, 1, for a total of 5,726; a total of 335,289 cases; PCR tests, 4,677; antigen tests, 1,055.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are Washington, 43; Benton, 34; and Pulaski, 28.

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

“Today's report shows lower active cases and fewer new cases compared to last week. Our vaccination efforts continue as we have doses of all three vaccines available in every county. These vaccines are safe, effective, and offer us the best path forward toward the end of this pandemic.”

Man, three juveniles arrested, accused of firing shots in Texarkana, Arkansas

TEXARKANA, Ark. — An 18-year-old Texarkana, Texas, man and three juveniles are in custody after allegedly firing shots in a Texarkana, Arkansas, neighborhood.

Clayton Moore Jr., 18, and three juvenile males are being held on charges of terroristic acts, according to a news release from the Texarkana Arkansas Police Department.

At 2:28 a.m. Wednesday, police officers were dispatched to the 3100 block of Hickory Street for a call for service, according to the news release. While officers were on the scene, they heard gunshots in the distance that appeared to be coming from the 3200 block of Laurel Street.

Officers were responding to that location when they encountered a gray Honda Accord driving at a high rate of speed, traveling in their direction around the 3200 block of Pecan Street. The officers observed the vehicle failing to stop at stop signs. The officers made a traffic stop on the vehicle and found the occupants in possession of firearms, according to the news release.

Officers investigated the area in the 3200 block of Laurel Street, and shell casings were found.

Detectives began their investigation and determined a parked vehicle had been shot in the area.

The investigation is ongoing.

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to call the criminal investigation division at 903-798-3154 or Crime Stoppers at 903-793-STOP (903-793-7867).

CDC Issues New Recommendations On Face Coverings

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• • • April 28, 2021 5:09 AM ET
Heard on [Morning Edition](#)



[Allison Aubrey](#)

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The CDC says fully vaccinated people don't need to wear masks in most outdoor settings. But don't throw them away yet — you'll still need masks in malls, hair salons and in crowded outdoor spaces.

A bill that would have eliminated voting on the Monday before an Election Day failed in the Arkansas House. Representatives voted 39-to-43 on Senate Bill 485, failing to get the needed support to pass. The legislation failed multiple times in committees, but ultimately did advance through the legislature. If it had passed the House, the bill would have gone to Gov. Asa Hutchinson. Speaking for the bill, Republican Rep. Jack Ladyman of Jonesboro pushed back against claims that it was a voter suppression bill and insisted it was an effort to assist poll workers.

NEWS07

:

“...does that”

Democratic Rep. Nicole Clowney of Fayetteville countered that the bill was indeed voter suppression because it would have made it harder for some Arkansans to vote. She also spoke on an example Ladyman gave where only one voter in Prairie County voted the Monday before Election Day.

NEWS08

:14

“...fair to me”

According to official vote tallies from the legislature, no Democrat in either chamber voted for the legislation, while those voting against the bill were bipartisan.

A bill that would have eliminated early voting the day before an election day failed in the Arkansas House chamber on this (Tues), the final day of the legislative session. KUAR's politics reporter Sarah Kellogg reports.

NEWS06

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SOC

The House ultimately did not pass Senate Bill 485, with 39 members voting for it and 43 members voting against it. The bill would have eliminated early voting on the day before either a primary or general election.

The bill failed three times in a Senate committee and one time in a House committee before ultimately advancing through the legislature and being brought up for a vote in the House, where if it passed, it would have gone to the governor.

Three lawmakers spoke in favor of the bill, framing it as an opportunity to give poll workers a break before Election Day. One who spoke for it was Republican Rep. Karilyn Brown of Sherwood.

CUT1**:20****“...election day”**

Having been a poll worker, I do know that there's a tremendous amount of work. They have to tabulate a lot of information, they have to get and make sure all the machines are working correctly, they have to get all of the voting materials out to the voting sites. There's a lot of work that goes into place to get ready for election day,” Brown said.

Four lawmakers spoke against the legislation, calling it an attempt at voter suppression, including Democratic Rep. Jamie Scott of North Little Rock.

CUT2**:28****“...my community”**

“This roadblock will impact hundred of Arkansans, republicans and democrats. I'm asking you today, please don't silence the voices of our communities and people that look like me. I represent a minority-majority district, this is one of the busiest days in my district and I can't stay silent about what it's going to do in my community,” Scott said.

Applause from the House could be heard after the vote. An attempt to clinch the vote, so the bill would not be able to be reconsidered, failed, by a vote of 25-58.

State Hesitancy 1

AB/MEH

04/27/21(TuesPM & WedPM)

Governor Asa Hutchinson says he's pondering on new ways to fight vaccine hesitancy in the state. At his weekly press briefing today (Tues), Hutchinson said as new cases and hospitalizations for COVID-19 decrease, the urgency of some people to get vaccinated is lessening as well. He's calling on employers, physicians, and the Department of Health to encourage people to get a vaccine.

News11

0:28

"...there age wise."

Hutchinson said to get Arkansas' vaccination rate from 40 to 60 percent, vaccine providers will have to do their part to make the shot available to populations that are harder to reach. Meanwhile the state reported five additional deaths today (Tues), along with 229 new cases of people testing positive.

State Hesitancy 2

AB/MEH

04/27/21(TuesPM & WedPM)

Arkansas reported five additional deaths today (Tues) from COVID-19. The Department of Health also said the number of new cases grew by 229. At his weekly press conference on the pandemic today (Tues), Governor Asa Hutchinson urged Arkansans to help combat vaccine hesitancy. As the overall number of cases and hospitalizations has declined, he said fewer people are feeling the need to get vaccinated. Hutchinson is challenging schools, employers, physicians, and organizations to do their part to make vaccines accessible to all.

News12

0:24

"...increase these numbers."

Health Secretary Dr. Jose Romero said it's important for vaccine providers to encourage people to get a vaccine because the number of variants, particularly the UK variant, have doubled in the state.

Filing Fee Bill 1

DJB/MEH

4/27/21(TuesPM/WedAM)

A bill that would have established a minimum filing fee for candidates of various political positions in Arkansas has failed in the state legislature. Members of the Senate today (Tues) voted down Senate Bill 684, sponsored by Republican Sen. Trent Garner of El Dorado. Speaking on the Senate floor, Garner responded to criticism that it would take away state political parties' abilities to set filing fees.

News01

0:18

"...taken care of."

Democratic Sen. Greg Leding of Fayetteville said Arkansas already has the highest filing fees in the country, and that setting a minimum fee wouldn't help.

News02

0:17

"...running for office."

Garner's bill would have required a minimum filing fee of \$45-hundred-dollars for state Senate and \$3-thousand dollars for the House of Representatives. The highest minimum fee would have been \$12-thousand dollars to run for governor or U-S Senate. The bill failed on a vote of 15 for, 14 against and six present or not voting.

St. Michael to offer J&J vaccine Saturday

TEXARKANA, Texas — CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System will host a free COVID-19 vaccination hub clinic on Saturday to administer the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

People 18 years old or older are now eligible to receive the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. To schedule an appointment, visit vaccinate.christushealth.org.

The Texas Department of State Health Services is recommending that vaccine providers in Texas resume administering the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine following the recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration.

Once an appointment has been made, individuals are asked to adhere to the clinic operational guidelines at CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System to support the efficiency and safety of the caregivers and other community residents alike.

- Please arrive no more than 15 minutes prior to appointment time. There is 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 vaccine 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 Road and St. Michael Loop or from St. Michael Drive.
- Please 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.

A bill that would have replaced the state's existing Confederate Flag Day with an Arkansas Day, failed in a Senate committee today (Monday). KUAR's politics reporter Sarah Kellogg has more.

NEWS06**1:37****SOC**

House Bill 1916 fell one vote short of the needed five in the Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee in order to advance to the full Senate. Members voted 4-3 for it, with one member not voting.

The bill, which passed in the House over a week ago with a vote of 80-7, would have replaced Arkansas' Confederate Flag Day, which occurs the Saturday before Easter Sunday each year, with Arkansas Day.

In presenting the bill to the Senate committee, Republican Rep. Austin McCollum of Bentonville, spoke on the origins of Confederate Flag Day and how it was not established right after the Civil War, but instead was passed in the late 1950s, during the civil rights movement. He also responded to claims that removing Confederate Flag Day would be "erasing history."

CUT1**:21****"...of this state"**

"I would point you specifically to the language of the bill, which says Arkansas Day shall be a day to reflect on the rich history, so it says right there, to reflect on the rich history, national treasures, diverse cultures, unmatched hospitality, shared spirit, and human resilience that makes the people of the state," McCollum said.

11 people spoke against the legislation in committee. Among them was Kay Tatum, Arkansas Society President of the National Society Daughters of Colonial Wars, who said she was speaking on behalf of 24 lineage societies.

CUT2**:16****"...ancestors endured"**

"This day is uniquely southern. It does not honor generals. It does not honor battles. It serves as a reflection of the southern people and the poverty, hardships, sacrifices, tragedies and atrocities of war that our ancestors endured," Tatum said.

The bill will likely not be brought up again for a vote as the 2021 Legislative Session comes to a close. SKK

It's now up to the Arkansas House to consider overriding a veto of a bill that would prohibit local police from enforcing federal gun laws in Arkansas. The Senate voted 21-12 Monday to override Gov. Asa Hutchinson's veto of Senate Bill 298. In a letter to lawmakers announcing his veto Friday, the governor said the partnership between state and federal law enforcement is "essential" and breaking that would put the safety of Arkansans at risk. Hutchinson also said because the bill would make current federal gun laws unenforceable on a state level, it would be "unclear" the impact that would have on current criminal proceedings. In presenting his motion for an override, Republican Sen. Gary Stubblefield of Branch said he was working on a separate bill to address some of the concerns Hutchinson raised.

NEWS11**:22****"...long time"**

Stubblefield filed the new bill, Senate Bill 171, Monday evening, leaving questions on whether it can pass before the legislature adjourns for a recess before reconvening again in the Fall to address redistricting. Among the senators against overriding the veto was Senate President Pro Tempore Jimmy Hickey. He claimed Stubblefield broke an agreement between the two concerning the bill, where parts of Stubblefield's bill would be incorporated into a different bill, and said Stubblefield agreed not to bring the veto up for consideration.

NEWS12**:25****"...this morning"**

The veto override now goes over to the House, where if passed by a simple majority. it will become law.

KUAF Funeral Funds

JF/DM

4/26 - HOLD

The federal government is helping pay for some pandemic-related funeral expenses. Jacqueline Froelich with partner station KUAF in Fayetteville spoke with an inspector from the Funeral Services Division of Arkansas' Insurance Department to find out more.

News23 3:02 ABRUPT OUTCUE. "...has no precedent. I'm Jacqueline Froehlich."

A bill that would have allowed the Arkansas General Assembly to amend voter-approved constitutional amendments by a two-thirds vote of each chamber failed in the Senate on Monday. Senators voted 9-17, with two members voting present on Senate Bill 75, ultimately failing the bill. Under the legislation, the legislature would be able to modify or even repeal measures “approved by a vote of the people.” In presenting the bill to the Senate, Republican Sen. Mark Johnson of Little Rock spoke on the sales tax for roads Arkansans approved in 2020, and how the state Supreme Court ruled in October that under the amendment, the money gained from that tax cannot go towards highways larger than four lanes because of the specific wording of the amendment itself. The bill, Johnson argued, was not only needed to change that particular amendment to include multi-lane highways, but also to set a precedent for the legislative body concerning their powers to amend voter-approved measures, powers that the bill interprets are already provided by the existing constitution.

NEWS10**:18****“...change things”**

Democratic Sen. Clarke Tucker of Little Rock questioned Johnson on the bill.

NEWS11**:13****“...it could.**

After the bill failed, Johnson motioned it be moved to the Interim Committee for study, which was approved.

A bill that would have replaced the state's current Confederate Flag Day with Arkansas Day, fell one vote short from passing a Senate committee today (Monday). By a vote of 4-3, with one member not voting, the Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee did not advance the bill. It would have replaced the existing holiday with one that, according to the legislation, would have promoted the state's history, national treasures and diverse cultures. Eleven people spoke against the bill during the public testimony phase, with many saying the removal of Confederate Flag Day is disrespectful to those soldiers and erases history. Republican Sen. Bob Ballinger of Ozark told attendees it was their responsibility to teach or preserve history and they would have that ability under an "Arkansas Day."

NEWS07**:14****"...for you"**

Ballinger also said that while many in his district see the Confederate Flag as a symbol of heritage, a "majority of the public" see the flag associated with racism. The bill will likely not be brought up again for a vote as the 2021 legislative session is slated to adjourn tomorrow (Tues).

Religious Freedom 1

DJB/MEH 4/26/2021(MonPM/TuesAM)

Arkansas lawmakers have advanced a third proposed constitutional amendment to put before voters on the 2022 ballot. Members of the House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committee today (Mon) approved Senate Joint Resolution 14, also known as the “Arkansas Religious Freedom Amendment.” The amendment’s House co-sponsor, Republican Rep. Jimmy Gazaway of Paragould, said it is intended to enshrine the free exercise of religion in the state constitution.

News04

0:24

“...types of infringements.”

The proposal now goes to the full House for a vote. Lawmakers have also proposed an amendment allowing the legislature to call a special session without the governor’s approval, and a proposal requiring a higher vote threshold for proposed amendments to the state constitution.

Religious Freedom 2

DJB/MEH 4/26/2021(MonPM/TuesAM)

Lawmakers have advanced a proposed amendment to the Arkansas Constitution that they say would prohibit the federal government from restricting free expression of religion. Members of the House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committee today (Mon) approved Senate Joint Resolution 14, sponsored by Republican Sen. Jason Rapert of Conway. But Rep. Josh Miller, a Republican of Heber Springs, said the proposal isn’t necessary and wouldn’t be effective in ensuring religious liberties.

News05

0:22

“...in the Constitution.”

Opponents of the proposal also said it doesn’t include language protecting against “substantial” burdens on religious freedom, which could lead the proposal to be struck down in court. If approved by both chambers of the legislature, the proposal would be referred to voters on the 2022 ballot.

A bill that would do away with early voting on the Monday before Election Day has passed out of committee after failing in the same committee earlier in the day. Following numerous attempts at passage, members of the House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committee voted 11 to 4 to pass Senate Bill 485 in a meeting this afternoon (Mon). Speaking earlier today (Mon), the bill's sponsor, Republican Sen. Kim Hammer of Benton, said, unlike voting itself, early voting is a privilege and therefore his bill doesn't restrict the rights of Arkansans.

News01

0:19

"...Election Day occurs."

Hammer said the bill is necessary to give poll workers a break before Election Day, and because Monday is typically a low-voter turnout day in most rural precincts. But Benton County Clerk Betsy Harrell said doing away with Monday as an early voting day would result in larger lines on other days.

News02

0:26

"...on Monday night."

The bill failed the House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committee Monday morning on a vote of 10 to 4, before later passing the same committee in the afternoon. It now goes to the full House for a vote.

A bill that could have allowed public and open enrollment charter schools to place limitations on teaching certain aspects about racism failed in a Senate committee today (Mon). By a vote of 4-3, the Senate Education Committee did not get the five votes needed to advance House Bill 1761. It would have given schools the ability to prohibit materials, lessons or teachings on racism that fell under a list of five ideas. Those included that an individual from any race or ethnicity is “inherently” racist or that the United States as a whole is systemically racist. In presenting the bill to the committee, Republican Rep. Mark Lowery of Maumelle spoke specifically on the part of the bill that prohibits teaching that the county is systemically racist.

NEWS08**:10****“...say no”**

In questioning Lowery on the bill, Democratic Sen. Joyce Elliott asked about a section of the bill prohibiting the teaching that any race or ethnicity should “feel guilt or shame” due to their ethnicity.

NEWS09**:22****“...to do”**

The bill will likely not be brought up again as the 2021 legislative session is set to adjourn today (Tues).

Logomotive TW

MEH

4/26 (Mon PM – 5:50 p.m.)

(Self-contained – can work for other stations using first sentence as lead)

News15

11:07

SOC

A book released in the U.S. this month focused on the once dramatic railroad logos and other graphics from decades ago that used to be seen on the sides of locomotives or rail cars. Many of the railroads are long-gone or merged with other companies, but the book called *Logomotive: Railroad Graphics and the American Dream* captures some of the most incredible designs and features many never widely seen original photos as well as an outsider's perspective.

Coauthor Ian Logan is from Brittan and joins me now. Hi Ian...

Little Rock Tax - Voicer**DM/MEH 4/26/21 MonPM/Tue AM**

The Little Rock city leaders are deciding whether to ask voters to approve a sales tax increase. KUAR's David Monteith has more on tomorrow's (Tues) special meeting.

NEWS22 0:45 SOC

The Little Rock Board of Directors is considering an ordinance that would ask voters to weigh in on a one cent sales tax increase. If approved, the ordinance would permit a special election to be held on July 13th. During last week's board meeting, those speaking in favor of the tax included representatives from the Port of Little Rock and the Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau. Opponents argued any increase in the sales tax unfairly impacts those with lower incomes, and that many people are still facing financial hardships due to the coronavirus pandemic. If approved, the new tax would be levied beginning in next January. Funds generated by the proposed tax increase would pay for capital improvements outlined in Mayor Frank Scott, Jr's "Rebuild the Rock" proposal. David Monteith, KUAR News. In Little Rock, I'm David Monteith.

The Texarkana Farmers' Market located at 305 Texas Blvd is set to open for the 2021 summer season on Saturday, May 1st. The theme of the May 1st market will be 'Meet your Farmers' sponsored by Farmers Bank and Trust. There will be social media campaign that highlight the many vendors that will be a part of the 2021 Farmers' Market. The market opens at 7am until noon/sold out every Saturday through July. Due to COVID-19, social distancing will be practiced, and facemasks are encouraged.

Cultural Foods Coordinator and Mobile Market Manager Annemarie Sullivan said, "After an unpredictable season last year, we have a steady new stream of people looking for more local, healthy food choices. We are excited to open back up and fill that need! Whether you are a regular at the market, or just found us, we appreciate you making time on a Saturday to come out and get the best in locally produced foods and goods. Your purchases support our local economy, family farms, and small businesses."

Members of the public can check the Texarkana Farmers Market website or social media pages for updates throughout the season. Visit our website - <https://www.texarkanafarmersmarket.com/> to find information on how to become a vendor, rules, and regulations for selling, event information, and updates for when the TXK Market Boxes will reopen.

The Texarkana Farmers' Market is funded in part by a USDA grant and local sponsors. For more information please contact, Keith Beason, Planner II and at 903-798-3901 or email keith.beason@txkusa.org.

In its Monday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 63 new cases; 1,805 active cases; 170 hospitalized, which is up 18 from Sunday; 27 on ventilators, which is up 3 from Sunday; deaths added today, 2, for a total of 5,720; a total of 334,769 cases; PCR tests, 1,158; antigen tests, 106.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are Benton, 12; Craighead, 7; and Pulaski and Washington with 6 each.

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

“We have resumed administration of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine today. This is great news, and it will allow us to increase the number of doses administered in the coming days and weeks. If you haven't gotten vaccinated, schedule your appointment today.”

Police: Man arrested after Wadley scare had pellet gun

TEXARKANA, Texas —The gun that a man carried into Wadley Regional Medical Center on Sunday night was not a firearm, according to police.

The gun, which was found Monday morning at Wadley, was described as a pellet gun, said Texarkana, Texas, Police Sgt. Kim Weaver.

The suspect, Donte Henderson, 24, has been arrested on charges of interference with public duties and false alarm or report of emergency, Weaver said. The false alarm charge stems from Henderson allegedly pulling an emergency alarm inside the hospital.

Police received the call about 8 p.m. Sunday of a man running into Wadley's emergency room with a gun. The hospital went into lockdown.

Henderson reportedly told people waiting in the emergency room that he was being chased before he continued to run through other areas of the hospital. TTPD officers arrested him a short time later.

A person allegedly chasing Henderson was never located, Weaver said.

Police swarmed the hospital and its parking lot after receiving the call but the suspect was apprehended before the SWAT team arrived, Weaver said.

TEXARKANA, Texas — A Texarkana area attorney apparently drowned late Sunday afternoon in Wright Patman Lake.

The drowning victim, identified as Joe Tyler, 41, was found floating in the lake about 4:22 p.m., according to Bowie County Precinct 1 Place 1 Justice of the Peace Nancy Talley, who confirmed his identity.

Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife Game Warden Capt. Shawn Hervey of the department's Law Enforcement Division said that when he received the call about a possible drowning around 4:30 p.m., he went to the lake where some fishermen had found Tyler floating in the water. He added that they had since placed him in a standing vessel until he could be identified.

Hervey also said that Tyler's boat was also found near the north side of Wright Patman Lake, close to the lake's Clear Springs swimming area, after it had drifted some distance.

Hervey said the incident is being treated as an accidental death.

Tyler was found floating in the water about half an hour after he was reported missing.

Talley said Tyler's body was sent to Dallas for an autopsy.

TEXARKANA, Texas — A man is in custody after A bizarre incident at a local hospital Sunday Night

Texarkana Police spokesman Shawn Vaughn said in a news release the event started with a man allegedly running into a local emergency room with a gun Sunday evening.

The suspect, identified Monday morning as Donte Henderson age unknown, reportedly told people waiting in the Wadley Regional Medical Center's emergency room that he was being chased by unknown individuals before he continued to run through other areas of the hospital.

Hospital officials immediately put the hospital on lockdown and TTPD officers were able to arrest Henderson around 8 p.m. Sunday, according to Texas-side Police Public Information Officer Shawn Vaughn. No one was injured during the even and officials are still trying to determine what led to the incident.

Vaughn said charges were still pending against Williams.

Governor Asa Hutchinson is hoping future governors of Arkansas will have greater veto power. On Arkansas PBS over the weekend, Hutchinson said he opposes a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow the state legislature to call a special session without permission from the governor. Hutchinson says the amendment would create an imbalance of power in state government. He also said a larger legislative majority should be needed to override vetoes from the governor.

NEWS20 0:14 “...a majority override.”

Hutchinson last week vetoed a bill which would prohibit state employees and law enforcement officers from assisting federal officials enforcing gun laws. Arkansas is one of only six states in which a simple majority can override a governor’s veto. In most states a two-thirds vote is required.

Republican Senator Tom Cotton is focusing most of his campaign efforts on 2022 elections outside of Arkansas. During an interview with Talk Business and Politics, Cotton said he is not ready to endorse a candidate in the race for governor of Arkansas. Former White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders and Attorney General Leslie Rutledge are challenging one another in the Republican gubernatorial primary.

NEWS21 0:15 “...many different offices.”

The senator from Arkansas said the reason for an upcoming trip to Iowa is to help the reelection campaign of Republican Senator Chuck Grassley (grass-lee). Cotton would not confirm or deny plans to run for president in 2024. You can hear more from the interview on Talk Business & Politics tonight just after 6 on KUAR.

TEXARKANA, Texas — During a meeting Monday, the City Council is expected to vote on an ordinance naming David Orr as interim city manager.

Orr would take over for City Manager Shirley Jaster, who is retiring at the end of the month.

Last July, the Council approved Orr's promotion to assistant city manager.

He has continued to serve in his previous position as director of planning and community development, a job he began in 2014. His career with the city began with an administrative services manager position in 2009.

Earlier this month, the city advertised to recruit applicants for the planning director position, but that listing no longer appears on the city website.

The agenda includes a public forum during which members of the public may address the Council on any topic for up to five minutes each.

The meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. Monday at City Hall, 220 Texas Blvd. Live streaming video will be available through the city's website, ci.texarkana.tx.us.

Topics

After more than an hour of debate yesterday (Thursday), a bill reforming the absentee voting process in Arkansas failed in the state legislature. Senate Bill 701 failed in the Senate with 11 members voting in favor, 20 voting against and two members not voting. The bill's sponsor, Democratic Sen. Clarke Tucker of Little Rock, said he made numerous concessions to Republicans in amending the bill.

News04

0:18

"...absentee balloting process."

Numerous Senators voiced their opposition to the bill being extracted from the Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committee to the House floor without committee members voting to advance it. Tucker had moved to undo that action, but a fellow committee member, Republican Sen. Bob Ballinger, said the bill deserved to be heard by the full Senate.

News05

0:17

"...why would he?"

The bill would have required simpler language on absentee ballot applications, and would have removed the deadline for poll workers to count absentee ballots on Election Day. Lawmakers ultimately did not approve the bill after lengthy debate.

Constitutional Amendment 1

DJB/MEH

4/22/21(ThursPM/FriAM)

The Arkansas Senate has given final approval to a proposed constitutional amendment that would restrict the citizen-led ballot initiative process. Senators voted 23 to 6 in favor of House Joint Resolution 1005, also known as the “Constitutional Amendment and Ballot Initiative Reform Amendment.”

Republican Sen. Bart Hester of Cave Springs said it would put Arkansas more in line with other states.

News01

0:20

“...to our constitution.”

The proposal would require proposed amendments to the state constitution referred to the ballot by citizens to receive 60% of the vote to pass, rather than a simple majority. If approved by Gov. Asa Hutchinson, it will be one of three proposed amendments referred by the legislature to the ballot in 2022.

A bill that would establish statewide minimum housing standards is one step closer to going to the governor, after passing the Arkansas House today (Thursday). By a vote of 89-to-zero, with one member voting present, representatives passed Senate Bill 594. It would establish standards for rental properties that landlords must provide such as an “available source of electricity” and a “functioning” roof.

Neither landlords or tenants rights’ advocates have expressed major dissent over the amended legislation, though Lynn Foster with the group Arkansans for Stronger Communities, said in committee the bill does not do enough to be considered a “habitability standards bill.” Arkansas is currently the only state in the country without a statewide warranty of habitability in its code.

Republican Rep. Spencer Hawks of Conway presented the bill to the House floor.

NEWS06**:22****“...and poverty”**

“SB 594, while narrowly crafted, will take care of bad actors out there that have been exploiting renters for far too long, [but] not creating overly burdensome requirements on property owners that will raise rates of rents, putting stress on an already vulnerable population and in turn perpetuating homelessness and poverty.” Hawks said.

No one spoke for or against the legislation on the House floor. Because of an amendment to the bill on the House side, the Senate must take up and vote on the bill again before it goes to the governor.

One Million 1

MEH

4/22 (Thurs PM & Fri AM)

Arkansas has crossed a key threshold in the battle against COVID-19. Today (Thurs) a student from Shorter College became the one millionth person in the state to be vaccinated. Governor Asa Hutchinson was on hand for the event, noting it means one-third of the state's residents have received a vaccine. He also noted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released its first evaluation of how Arkansas compares to other states regarding vaccinations.

News15 0:20 "...and getting shots."

The one millionth vaccine was administered one day after the state recorded it's biggest one day increase in cases in more than a month.

One Million 2

MEH

4/22 (Thurs PM & Fri AM)

A student from Shorter College in North Little Rock today (Thurs) became the one millionth Arkansan to be vaccinated for COVID-19. Cheryl Moore was then presented a pin from Governor Asa Hutchinson, who said the young woman represents an age group the state is making a special effort to reach out to. A nurse at UAMS, who was the first to get a vaccine, was also presented with a pin. Hutchinson said during the ceremony that this marks a significant milestone for the state.

News16 0:22 "...from this pandemic."

Arkansas surpassed 57-hundred deaths this week from COVID-19. Wednesday the state reported its biggest one-day increase in new cases in more than a month.

CASA 5K run is back

After a two-year hiatus, the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children-Texarkana will hold its seventh Colorful 5K Run this Saturday morning.

The race is a 3.1 mile fitness running/walking event on a cross county trail. The run begins on an open field and winds through a dirt trail system, and the route is repeated once. The location is Trinity Baptist Church/Cross Country Trail, 3115 Trinity Boulevard, and the pre-race stretch and warm-up begins at 8 a.m.

It starts with each participant releasing a bag of color into the air creating a burst of color. Stations will be located throughout the race route where participants will be showered with brightly colored powder, turning their white shirts into a color explosion. The color is made from eco-friendly food colored cornstarch.

Executive Director Brandy Eldridge said the organization is ecstatic to get back to tradition with this event.

"We're super excited," Eldridge said. "First of all, just for the nonprofit world, fundraisers in the last year have been pretty null. And that's hard for nonprofits to survive without fundraisers because that is how we keep the doors open. But this fundraiser in particular is a family event.

"Our nonprofit is about taking care of kids and trying to end child abuse. When we do have children who have been victims of child abuse, it affects the whole family. So, when we see the bad stuff all day long, every single day, it's good for our staff and community to do something fun and celebrate that there is hope."

CASA recently held its Save Jane event, which took over an hour and a half to read all the names of the over 1,100 children they served last year. Eldridge said this puts what they're doing into perspective.

"That is sobering," she said. "It brings a deep awareness, but it's sad and it's hard. We don't always get to share the hope of it. When those children have been placed in foster care, and they get to go back to their families because their families have worked hard and changed their lives to be good parents, or when the children who are adopted and go through therapy services turn out to be this amazing kid when they've had the most traumatic events of their life — That's what the color run is for. It is a celebration of all the work the staff, volunteers and community do to help the children."

Politics

Biden Administration Reaches Out To Rural Americans To Get Vaccinated

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□ □ □ April 22, 2021 5:04 AM ET

Heard on [Morning Edition](#)

Tamara Keith JOINED RACHEL MARTIN THIS MORNING

The president's team has roped in community groups across the nation to try to persuade their neighbors to get a COVID-19 vaccine. And when it comes to rural America, there's a lot of work to do.

A bill that would have barred people under 21-years-old from being sentenced to life without parole has failed in an Arkansas legislative committee. The Senate Judiciary committee today (Wed) voted against Senate Bill 591, sponsored by Democratic Sen. Greg Leding of Fayetteville. Criminal justice reform activist Mela-Sidq (MEL-uh sid-EEK) Supreme spoke in favor of the bill, saying it would end overly-punitive sentencing for young people.

News03

0:22

“...a second chance?”

The bill would have added on to a 2017 state law which banned life sentences without parole for people under 18 to include those who were between 18 and 21 when sentenced. Republican Sen. Trent Garner of El Dorado said that would put added emotional strain on the families of victims.

News04

0:21

“...just cannot accept.”

Supporters of the bill said inmates would still have to go through a rigorous parole process before being released, and that they would have to serve at least 25 years of a sentence to be eligible for parole. The bill failed on a voice vote.

Monday Voting 1

DJB/MEH 4/21/2021(WedPM/ThursAM)

A bill that would have done away with early voting on the Monday before an Election Day has failed for a third time in the state legislature. The Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committee today (Wed) failed to pass Senate Bill 485, sponsored by Republican Sen. Kim Hammer of Benton. Kristi Stahr (STAR), chair of the Pulaski County Election Commission, told committee members the bill was needed to give poll workers a break after the traditional early voting period.

News01

0:13

“...on Election Day.”

Pulaski County Election Commissioner Joshua Price, the panel’s lone Democrat, said Monday early voting should still be allowed for the sake of consistency.

News02

0:16

“...20, 30 years.”

The bill failed on a voice vote, which was later expunged meaning the measure could be brought before the committee again.

The Arkansas House has advanced a bill that would prohibit public schools as well as open enrollment charter schools in the state from teaching certain aspects about racism. The House today (on Wednesday) voted 63-13 to pass House Bill 1761. Under the legislation, schools would be unable to teach anything that falls under a list of five ideas. Those include: that any individual from a particular race or ethnicity is inherently racist, or that any race or ethnicity should “feel guilt or shame” due to their race or ethnicity. The bill was revised from its original language to include more permissive language as opposed to mandatory language. It also reduced the list of aspects or ideas that could not be taught. In speaking on the bill on the House floor, Democratic Rep. Reginald Murdock of Marianna commended bill sponsor Rep. Mark Lowery for reaching out to him to work on the bill and make it more of a compromise.

NEWS06**:22****“...about us”**

Murdock voted neither for nor against the bill, his vote is listed as “Not Voting.” In speaking against the bill, Democratic Rep. Megan Godfrey of Springdale said while she agreed that the amending of this bill was a collaborative process, she thought the legislation warranted more discussion and collaboration, “particularly among our colleagues of color.”

NEWS07**:20****“...a vote”**

The bill now goes to the Senate Education Committee.

In its Wednesday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 352 new cases; 1,943 active cases; 175 hospitalized, which is down 2 from Tuesday; 24 on ventilators, which is unchanged from Tuesday; deaths added today, 2, for a total of 5,708; a total of 334,061 cases; PCR tests, 4,150; antigen tests, 1,028.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are Washington, 44; Benton, 43; and Pulaski, 39.

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

“The increase in new cases from today's report is a serious reminder of the importance to get vaccinated. It is also a reminder that the virus is still here along with the more contagious variants. Our best defense is the vaccine. We have plenty of doses available, so if you're 16 and older, schedule your appointment today.”

TexAmericas welcomes trucking operation

TEXARKANA, Texas — Woodfield, Inc., of Camden, Arkansas, is setting up a regional operations center and dispatch office at TexAmericas Center's East Campus. Expected to begin operations in May, the center will co-ordinate transport operations for Woodfield throughout the Mid-West, South and Eastern seaboard.

"They will handle just about everything," said Eric Voyles, TexAmericas Center vice-president and chief economic development officer. "Local runs, over-the-road. They tend to specialize in flatbed cargo operations."

According to Voyles, this deal was set fairly quickly and smoothly.

"The deal just popped up," he said. "They needed space, we had it. We've added some additional infrastructure to support their operations, and they will be rolling in May."

An additional attraction for Woodfield to TexAmericas Center was the flexibility of the space.

"We have plenty of warehouse space as well as Interstate access, just the kinds of things these sorts of organizations are looking for," Voyles said.

Jimmy Starr, owner of Woodfield, Inc., said he is leasing three acres.

"We may add to that later," he said. "We are going to have about 20-30 drivers based there, supported by an office staff of about six to eight people. It is a good location for the area and for the operations we want to set up. We have access to a good highway system and lots of potential for expansion. And we plan on doing that. Already, we are hiring more drivers."

The deal is the result of "decades of work and preparation," said Scott Norton, executive director and chief executive officer. "We've been putting together infrastructure, had environmental cleanup operations going, a good marketing campaign, and a great staff. This all has been a process of building up to this sort of thing."

(TexAmericas Center is sprawling business complex located about 20 miles west of Texarkana and near New Boston, Texas. For those interested in driving for Woodfield, Inc., go to woodfieldinc.com online.)

WAKE VILLAGE, Texas — The police department here will join other local agencies along with the Drug Enforcement Agency Saturday in the National Drug Take Back Initiative.

Wake Village Police Department will set up a collection point from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the police department located at 612 Burma Road. This will give members of the community the chance to surrender expired, unwanted, or unused prescription controlled substances and other medications for safe destruction. Unused or expired prescription medications are a public safety issue, leading to accidental poisoning, overdose, and abuse.

For more information contact Sgt. Todd Aultman at 903-838-5580.

George W. Bush Lends His Voice To Immigrants In 'Out Of Many, One'

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• • • April 21, 2015:03 AM ET
Heard on [Morning Edition](#)

[Rachel Martin](#)

Former presidents typically try not to wade into politics — and former President George W. Bush has made a point of sticking to that unspoken rule.

In office, he pushed for immigration reform. But he hasn't discussed the matter in a significant way since he left office — until now.

He's doing it in a new book of portraits called *Out of Many, One*. It features the stories of 43 immigrants — athletes and public servants, business leaders, educators.

In a conversation with NPR, former President Bush talks about his art and immigration WITH RACHEL MARTIN.

A bill that would prohibit entities in Arkansas from requiring proof of a COVID-19 vaccine, also called a “vaccine passport,” has passed in the state Senate. By a vote of 23-to-8 Tuesday, senators advance Senate Bill 615. The legislation prohibits the state, a state agency or entity, a political subdivision of the state or any state or local official from requiring an individual produce documentation that they have been vaccinated. The bill also prohibits the need of a COVID-19 vaccine as a “condition of entry, travel, education or services.” In presenting the bill, Republican Sen. Trent Garner of El Dorado spoke on the need for such legislation, even if it means mandating what businesses can do.

NEWS08**:18****“...is frankly unamerican”**

Democratic Sen. Clarke Tucker of Little Rock asked Garner why there should be a pushback on COVID-19 vaccines compared to other vaccine requirements.

NEWS09**:13****“...by us”**

Garner listed the novelty of the COVID-19 vaccine as one of the reasons why this bill is needed, saying other vaccines have been around for “generations.” The bill now goes to the House Public Health, Welfare and Labor committee.

Arkansas lawmakers have voted down a proposal allowing people convicted of rape to be sentenced to death. Members of the House Judiciary committee today (Tues) voted against Senate Bill 284, sponsored by Republican Sen. Trent Garner of El Dorado. Speaking before the vote, Garner admitted the bill would likely be found unconstitutional because of Supreme Court precedent that says the death penalty can't be applied for crimes that don't involve a loss of life.

News05

0:16

"...run from it."

The bill would have allowed people convicted of raping and causing serious injury to someone under the age of 10 to be sentenced to death or to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Current sentencing guidelines in Arkansas require a minimum 25-year sentence for rape if the victim is under 14 years of age.

A bill that would remove parole for felons convicted of firearms charges is one vote away from becoming law. Members of the House Judiciary committee today (Tues) approved Senate Bill 300, sponsored by Republican Rep. Keith Slape of Compton. Former U-S Attorney Cody Hiland (HIGH-lund) said the bill is needed to help make up for sentencing guidelines prosecutors see as ineffectual.

News01

0:23

“...uh, the community.”

The bill would require people previously convicted of a violent felony who are charged with possessing a firearm to serve 100% of their sentence for the gun charge. Jeff Rosenzweig (ROSE-in-swag) with the Arkansas Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers said the bill is overly broad, and would apply to people previously convicted of non-violent felonies who are charged with possessing a gun AND using it in a crime.

News02

0:17

“...be a felony.”

The bill passed on a voice vote and now goes to the full House, where if passed, it would then go to the governor’s desk.

Governor-Floyd 1

CDB/MEH

4/20/2021 (TuesPM/WedAM)

As the nation reacts to the conviction of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson is expressing his support for potential demonstrations in the state. The verdict comes almost a year after the initial protests throughout Arkansas and the nation after the death of George Floyd at the hands of police.

News24

0:19

“... are well protected.”

The protests in Arkansas last summer stretched over several weeks and included tensions between demonstrators and law enforcement. Dozens of arrests were made at locations around the state.

(billboard)

NPR NEWS

NOON: This is Ozarks at Large for Wednesday, April 21st, 2021 on your public radio station, 91.3, KUAF...we are a listener-supported service of the School of Journalism and Strategic Media at the University of Arkansas. I'm Kyle Kellams.

On today's show,

After Ozarks, on Here and Now,

SEVEN:

This is Ozarks at Large. HEALTHY START IN

HEALTHY STORY

Governor Asa Hutchinson says he is encouraged more than 40 percent of Arkansans 18 and over have at least been partially vaccinated...but he says he's concerned that vaccine hesitancy may slow the immunization rate. The governor spent much of his weekly virus briefing yesterday rallying Arkansans to get their shots. Statistics from the Arkansas Department of Health indicate 27-and-a-half percent of residents 18 and over are fully vaccinated and another 14 percent partially so.

Asa concern "but I will also say...that we want." :31

The governor says if the state is unable to eventually get to the goal of seventy percent vaccination, there could be consequences for a number of Arkansans:

Asa seventy "well, it means...intensive effort."

The most recent numbers indicate 52 percent of Arkansans 65 and older are fully vaccinated and another 16 percent partially immunized. Arkansans identifying as Hispanic have the highest population percentage vaccinated, 78 percent either partially or fully vaccinated. 49 percent of white Arkansans are fully vaccinated and nearly 45 percent of Black Arkansans have had at least a partial dose. The governor says the most recent numbers show some success in reaching minority populations with vaccines:

Asa success "and the story line is...access to the vaccine." :31

Dr. Jose Romero, Arkansas Secretary of Health, says he and others at ADH are continuing to monitor the rate of Covid-19 variants infection in the state.

Jose variant "and at least...more transmissibility."

He says those numbers are the tip of the iceberg. Not every sample in the state is being tested to see if it is a variant and it is likely there are more cases than known. Dr. Romero says without more people getting vaccinated, there will be significant transmission of new cases of the virus in the state. He says in states where more variants are being diagnosed, the virus is more severe and more easily transmitted among young people. The state continues to offer a

Vaccine Children 1
WedAM)

AB/MEH

4/20/2021(TuesPM &

Arkansas' vaccination rate of adults 18 and older is below the national average. At his weekly press conference today (Tues), Governor Asa Hutchinson announced at least 14 percent of adults have received a shot, and at least 27 percent have been fully vaccinated. While Hutchinson said these numbers continue to increase, the state needs to reach at least 50 percent of adults receiving the vaccine.

News11

0:28

“...that we want.”

Hutchinson said the Department of Health and Department of Education are focusing on getting students 16 and older vaccinated before summer break. He said the departments are working with schools so they can have more access to the vaccine.

Vaccine Children 2
WedAM)

AB/MEH

4/20/2021(TuesPM &

Arkansas has reported an increase in the UK and California variants of COVID-19. At Governor Asa Hutchinson's weekly press briefing today (Tues), Health Secretary Dr. Jose Romero said the state's new cases increased by 25 percent compared to last week and there was a 70 percent increase in UK variants. He said children and adolescents are more susceptible to contracting these variants which is why the Department of Education is partnering with schools to get students 16 and older vaccinated.

News12

0:19

“...keep pushing ahead.”

Senate Tax 1
4/19/21(MonPM/TuesAM)

DJB

The sponsor of a bill that would eliminate personal income tax in Arkansas says he's giving up on the measure for now. Republican Sen. Trent Garner of El Dorado pulled his bill from the Senate Revenue and Taxation committee today (Mon) before members took a vote on it. Garner said he views his bill as starting a conversation on a possible gradual reduction of income taxes over several years.

News01

0:21

"...would do it."

Garner said he will propose an interim study on the bill, which would have immediately dropped the state's personal income tax rate to 0%. The Department of Finance and Administration said that would have had an impact of about \$3 billion dollars on state revenue.

Session Amendment 1
4/19/21(MonPM/TuesAM)

DJB

State lawmakers have advanced a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow the legislature to call a special session without the governor's permission. The Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committee today (Mon) approved an amended version of Senate Joint Resolution 10, sponsored by Republican Sen. Breanne Davis of Russellville. Davis said it would allow a session to be called by either the Speaker of the House or the Senate President, or by gathering signatures from at least two-thirds of the members of each legislative body.

News03

0:22

“...if we so choose.”

If approved by the full House and Senate, it would be one of three proposed constitutional amendments referred to voters in the 2022 election. A House committee last week approved a proposed amendment that would raise the vote threshold for citizen-led ballot initiatives to be approved by voters. A third proposed amendment, which will be drafted jointly by the House and Senate, has yet to be decided.

A bill that establishes statewide minimum housing standards for rental properties in Arkansas is one vote away from going to the governor's desk. KUAR's politics reporter Sarah Kellogg has more.

NEWS06**1:27****SOC**

By a voice vote, with no dissenting votes heard, the House Insurance and Commerce committee advanced Senate Bill 594 to the House. The bill amends the Arkansas Residential Landlord-Tenant Act of 2007 to include a set of minimum housing standards such as having a "available" source of electricity and a source of "potable" drinking water.

In presenting the bill to the committee, Republican Rep. Spencer Hawks of Conway, called the legislation an opportunity to protect tenants in the state.

CUT1**:16****"... their landlord"**

"What this bill does, is that it gives the tenants the ability to have some warrant of habitability and they also have the opportunity to leave a lease without penalty, without worry of repercussion from their landlord," Hawks said.

Currently, Arkansas is the only state in the country without a statewide implied warranty of habitability in its code. An earlier bill, which had greater support from tenant-advocates, but less from landlords, passed the same House committee a month ago, but has since stalled.

In speaking on the bill before the vote, Democratic Rep. Nicole Clowney of Fayetteville said this bill in her opinion, does not establish a warranty of habitability in the state, but that it was a step in the right direction.

CUT2**:15****"...checked off"**

"I think that this will help people. This will not hurt people; this will help people. I will be a yes on this bill, but I would just plead with my colleagues that we not let the conversation end here, that we not consider our job 'done,' that habitability is now checked off," Clowney said.

The bill now goes to the House, where if passed, it will go to the governor. SKK

KUAF Solar Schools

ZS/DM

Tues AM -- 6:45 & 8:45

Some Arkansas school districts are finding ways to harness the sun to increase teacher salaries. Zuzanna Sitek, from partner station KUAF in Fayetteville has details.

News23 4:20 ABRUPT OUTCUE. "...the next five years. I'm Zuzanna Sitek."

Levee Repairs 1 Wrap

MEH

4/19 (Mon AM)

Two years after historic flooding of the Arkansas River, repairs to the most impacted part of the levee system are on track to be completed this summer. KUAR's Michael Hibblen has details:

News15 1:39

SOC

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers says in Perry County, west of Little Rock, there was damage in 19 locations on the north and south sides of the river. In six places, the levee was completely breached, with flood water spreading for miles, damaging hundreds of homes. Project Manager Jonathan Gillip is overseeing repairs to the levee system in the county, which he says are about 15 percent complete. While finished, he expects the levee will be stronger. Levee Repairs A "We're not allowed... not as steep ... With a one-to-three slope, which he says is modern practice and more durable. The cost for repairs in Perry County, included in the contract awarded and design work, totals just over \$1 million. Faulkner County also saw damage, though not as extensive. The flooding occurred after reservoirs for the Arkansas River in Oklahoma exceeded capacity, with water having to be discharged.

Levee Repairs 2

MEH

4/19 (Mon AM)

Repair work to the Arkansas River levee system caused from major flooding two years ago is progressing. A combination of conditions led to the reservoirs for the river in Oklahoma to exceed capacity, with water having being discharged causing up to 2,000 homes to be damaged in central Arkansas. The most extensive flooding was in Perry County, where the levee system was damaged in 19 locations. Project Manager Jonathan Gillip with the Army Corps of Engineers is overseeing work in the county west of Little Rock. A key problem, he says, is that local levee boards for the system were inactive.

News16 0:18 "...in recent history."

Repair work to the levee system in Perry County, which is about 15 percent complete, is expected to total just over \$1 million dollars. Faulkner County also saw damage.

Health

WE have reached another milestone in the US race to defeat covid19. Half of Americans have received at least one shot of the Covid vaccine and nearly 33% are now fully vaccinated. 80% of nursing home residents have been vaccinated Dr. Fauci Gives Update On The U.S. Vaccine Rollout Efforts with Rachel Martin this morning

TEXARKANA, Ark. — During a regular meeting Monday, the city Board of Directors will consider leasing case management software to replace a system disabled by last December's ransomware attack on local government computers.

The software, called Virtual Justice, would go to the Texarkana Division of the Miller County District Court at a one-time cost of \$10,800 for installation and staff training, plus \$1,050 per month for the lease.

Virtual Justice was designed specifically for Arkansas courts and is used by more than 180, including all other departments of the District Court.

The system damaged in the attack has been re-installed, but its vendor, Tyler Technologies, will not be able to provide hands-on training for how to use it until June.

"Attempts at working through the re-installation process by telephone have proved to be unsuccessful and frustrating," the summary states.

Texarkana Division staff used Virtual Justice before switching to the Tyler Technologies system and are familiar with it.

The Board will also take up purchasing backup generators for the Fire Department.

The cost is just over \$71,500, accounted for in the current city budget. TMR Generators of Hooks, Texas, was the low bidder to provide the generators, which will run on natural gas.

The agenda includes a citizen communication time during which members of the public may address the Board on any topic for up to five minutes each.

The meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. Monday at City Hall, 216 Walnut St. It will be streamed live on the city's YouTube channel.

Hutchinson – 1

DM/

4/19 MonAM

EMBARGOED UNTIL MONDAY, 4/19

Governor Asa Hutchinson, whose term expires next year, is exploring ways to extend his political career. During an interview for Talk Business and Politics this week, Hutchinson described his plans for an organization that will influence the upcoming election.

NEWS20 0:23 “...country in 2022.”

Hutchinson said the organization will help educate voters, raise money, and support candidates who align with his vision for the Republican party and country. The governor would not confirm or deny whether or not he is considering running for president in 2024. You can hear more from the interview tonight just after 6 on KUAR.

Hutchinson – 2

DM/

4/19 MonAM

Governor Asa Hutchinson is expressing concern for another bill moving through the Arkansas legislature. The bill, known as the “Arkansas Sovereignty Act of 2021,” would prevent state law enforcement officers from assisting federal officers. On this week’s Talk Business and Politics, Hutchinson said his experiences as a U.S. District attorney prosecuting a supremacist group in the 1980s as one reason for his concern.

NEWS21 0:20 “...would be prohibited.”

Hutchinson, whose veto of bill banning gender reassignment services for transgender youth was overturned recently, did not say whether he plans to veto the bill if it makes it to his desk. The interview airs tonight just after 6 on KUAR.

A bill that would have established an online voting registration system in Arkansas failed to pass the Senate today (Thursday). The legislation, which passed the Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee on Tuesday, was one vote away from getting final approval and going to the governor. Republican Sen. Breanne Davis of Russellville presented it on the Senate floor.

NEWS06

:20

“...this room”

Though the bill did receive a majority of votes in the Senate with a vote of 18-to-13, it needed 24 votes to pass. Davis motioned to expunge the vote, meaning it could get brought again. Under the bill, Arkansans who have conducted business with the Department of Motor Vehicles, would have had the ability to register to vote through an online system.

Medicaid RE

MEH

4/15 (Thurs PM & Fri AM)

For a third day in a row the Arkansas House has failed to advance a bill reauthorizing the state's Medicaid expansion. Three-fourths support is needed to keep it for another year, but with no debate this (Thurs) afternoon, 64 representatives voted for it, 23 against it, and three voted present. The bill was approved by the Senate and needs House support to advance to the governor. The Medicaid expansion was first introduced in 2013 and has sharply divided Republicans and narrowly passed in previous years.

TEXARKANA, Texas — Boogie down with 1970s dance moves this Saturday at the Ace of Clubs House with Boogie Fever: 1971 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Held at the historic home's carriage house and on the lawn, this dance party is another in a continuing series of 1971-themed events celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Texarkana Museums System's founding.

For this free, fun, nostalgia-rich, BYOB shindig, '70s attire is encouraged, including your dancing shoes.

With that 50th anniversary in mind, the Museums System aims to celebrate with a 1971-style event, said Kristina Ellis, a docent and floater who works events at the TMS.

Such treats will include tortilla pinwheels, sweet-and-sour meatballs and more. People will be able to vote on the best outfit, too, and a photo area and selfie station will be set up so attendees can snap fun photographs.

"It's just a party to hang out and celebrate our 50th anniversary," Ellis said.

That BYOB includes beer, wine or whatever sort of beverage one wishes, including that "liquid courage." "Whatever their poison is, whatever they want to bring and have fun," said Ellis, noting attendees can wear masks if they wish, even ones that match their outfit. It's up to the partygoers.

"It is going to be a limited number because you know we don't have a whole lot of space," Ellis said.

The Ace of Clubs remains a one-of-a-kind historic home owned by three different families for a century before it was given to the TMS in 1985, according to a TMS news release.

"I would like this to be an opportunity for people to come out and see the Ace of Clubs. I'm hoping to at some point this summer start some restoration on it," Ellis said.

She said the TMS is working with someone at Texas A&M University-Texarkana on a project with plans for fundraising and improvements to some of the rooms, such as painting, at the Ace of Clubs.

Ellis hopes people will come out and see the Ace of Clubs in anticipation of that project. "Helping it out, because it is an older house," she said.

The 1885 home dates from the Victorian era. It possesses a unique architectural floor plan that's won the home fame and interest with its combination of three octagonal rooms and one long, rectangular room at the other end.

(Admission is free; donations are appreciated. Register at TexarkanaMuseums.org/Events or call 903-793-4831. The Ace of Clubs is located at 420 Pine St. in downtown Texarkana.)

Texas High School students received a \$2,000 check for winning the Texas Department of Transportation Traffic Safety Public Service Announcement competition held in March.

The students created a video about the hazards of distracted and drunk driving and beat out 12 other schools from the TxDOT Atlanta District that covers a nine-county area of Northeast Texas. The funds will go towards this year's Project Celebration at the school.

The video, titled, "Is a life worth your attention?" depicts senior Logan Diggs as a young man drinking alcohol, in addition to texting on a cell phone while a child simultaneously shoots a basketball in her driveway. The B roll stops as the ball rolls onto the street and the driver edges toward the child on the street.

Diggs said the video turned out better than expected, as he and fellow students hoped to send a message about safe driving after events like prom.

Senior Assad Malik said lives have been lost at too rapid of a rate in instances like this for the

The seniors said they were happy to be contributing to Project Celebration with the difficulties they've had trying to raise funds in the past year.

Diggs said he hopes to leave a message that will carry with the next group of seniors that come through Texas High.

"For us being seniors, we'd probably encourage other seniors to be there for one another," he said. "Although drinking is something those our age shouldn't be doing, for some people, they're inevitably going to do it. And I feel like if you're around someone who is, you should at least let them know not to drive. Or if they need to be somewhere, get them a designated driver."

EXARKANA, TX- The City of Texarkana, Texas reminds residents that one cubic yard of bulk waste can be placed curbside free of charge with waste and recycling carts with normal waste collection weekly.

“City-wide clean-up efforts are underway this Spring,” David Orr, Assistant City Manager said. “The City is encouraging participating in a trash-off this weekend, there’s a community wide yard sale and electronics recycling event scheduled for early May, and the Chamber of Commerce has a new anti-litter campaign in the works. We just hope to provide residents with a timely reminder that they can always put bulk waste at the curb, and it will be picked up with their trash.”

One cubic yard of bulk waste is the equivalent of the addition of two of the 96-gallon waste carts or an item the size of a sofa, large chair, or washing machine.

Those needing to remove an amount of bulk waste exceeding the one cubic yard allotment can make arrangements for the removal of such items by contacting Waste Management at (903) 794-4111 to schedule a pick-up and make payment arrangements.

CHRISTUS Trinity Clinic (CTC)-Richmond Road will host a free COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic on Saturday, April 17, 2021, administering Moderna vaccine. Individuals 18 years of age and older are eligible to receive the Moderna vaccine.

To schedule a vaccine appointment for CTC-Richmond Road, go to Christustrinityclinic.org. CTC-Richmond Road I is located at 3502 Richmond Road, Texarkana, TX.

Once an appointment has been made, individuals are asked to adhere to the clinic operational guidelines at to support the efficiency and safety of the caregivers and other community residents alike.

Individuals scheduling appointments at CHRISTUS Trinity Clinic-Richmond Road or CHRISTUS Trinity Clinic-New Boston should arrive for their vaccinations not more than 15 minutes prior to their appointment times, wear loose-fitting clothes and wear masks. Those who cannot come to their appointment alone because they need assistance may bring one (1) essential visitor.

The Most Popular J&J Vaccine Story On Facebook? A Conspiracy Theorist Posted It

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• • • April 15, 2021 5:01 AM ET
Heard on [Morning Edition](#)

[Miles Parks](#) joins Steve Inskeep on today's Morning Edition

[Twitter](#)

Leg Amendments 1 DJB/MEH 4/14/2021(WedPM/ThursAM)

An Arkansas House committee has endorsed a proposed state constitutional amendment to refer to voters. Members of the House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committee today (Wed) advanced a resolution known as the Constitutional Amendment and Ballot Reform Amendment. It would require initiatives referred to the ballot through the petition process to get 60 percent of the vote for approval, instead of a simple majority. But Rep. John Payton, a Republican from Wilburn, doubts it would find support from voters.

News01 0:17 "...and it failed."

The proposal is similar to a measure put before voters last year that would have put restrictions on the petitioning process and shorten deadlines for collecting signatures. The Arkansas Senate will also refer a proposed amendment, while the third proposal will be a joint amendment drafted by both the House and Senate. The three amendments referred by the legislature will go before voters next year.

A bill that would prohibit Arkansas from implementing any form of requirement for a “vaccine passport” has passed its first legislative hurdle. The Senate Public Health, Welfare and Labor committee, by a voice vote Wednesday, advanced Senate Bill 615. Under the legislation, the state, a state agency or entity, a political subdivision of the state, as well as any state or local official would not be able to require an individual to produce documentation that they have been vaccinated for COVID-19. In presenting his bill to the committee, Republican Sen. Trent Garner of El Dorado said though he thinks everyone should be vaccinated, he doesn’t believe the government should require it.

NEWS07**:28****“...to privacy”**

Representatives from the Arkansas Department of Health spoke against the bill, including Laura Shue, General Council for the department. She said the department was concerned about the “lack of definitions” in the bill.

NEWS08**:15****“...local officials”**

The Senate Bill 615 now goes to the full senate for a vote. A similar bill that would have prohibited the mandating of COVID-19 vaccines in order to enroll in a school or early learning center, as a condition for employment or in order to obtain a license, failed in a House committee last week.

A bill that adds professions to Arkansas' current Volunteer Health Care Act, has again passed a Senate committee and is one vote away from going to the governor. By a voice vote, the Senate Public Health, Welfare and Labor committee advanced House Bill 1439, which adds therapists, addiction specialists, and councilors into the program.

Under the existing program, health care professionals, including students enrolled in an accredited program that prepares them for a listed healthcare profession, can receive Continuing Medical Education or CME credits for delivering volunteer health care services to "eligible low income patients" through a contract with the Arkansas Department of Health. Professions currently included in the law, which the legislature passed four years ago, include pharmacists, dentists and dental hygienists, chiropractic physicians as well as others.

In speaking on an amendment to the bill, Democratic Sen. Clarke Tucker of Little Rock said the changes make it more inclusive.

NEWS06

:20

"...Arkansas Code"

No one spoke against the legislation. It now goes to the Senate for a full vote.
THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PEROT THEATRE WILL CHANGE HANDS IN THE NEAR FUTURE FOLLOWING A STUDY BY A CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE MANAGEMENT FOR THE PAST 41 YEARS WAS IN THE HANDS OF TRAHC BUT WILL TRANSFER TO THE TEXARKANA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA IN THE NEAR FUTURE. BRIAN GOESL IS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE TEXARKANA REGIONAL ARTS AND HUMANITIES COUNCIL.

((((((((((INTERVIEW)))))))))

TEXARKANA, Texas — A citizen advisory committee tasked by the city of Texarkana, Texas, to pick the future management company for the city-owned Perot Theatre has selected the Texarkana Symphony Orchestra for the job.

The TSO was picked by three committee members versus one vote apiece for the Texarkana Regional Arts & Humanities Council and VenuWorks, according to a city memo from Amanda Freeland, contracts administrator for the city.

After negotiations are complete, the selection will then go up for approval by the City Council, said Robby Robertson, the city parks and recreation director who has overseen the selection process. This contract would start in the fall.

The TSO vied with the current management company, TRAHC, and the Ames, Iowa-based VenuWorks for the job of managing the venerable, historic theater in downtown Texarkana.

TRAHC has managed the Perot for decades. All three applicants made their pitch with applications and in-person presentations in front of the committee.

The advisory committee consisted of five local residents: Dean Barry, Gail Eichler, Derrick McGary, Fred Norton and Debby Sutton. They made the decision on Thursday, March 31, according to the memo.

A bill that would allow Arkansas law enforcement agencies to disregard any federal gun laws has advanced to the state House. Members of the House Judiciary Committee today (Tues) passed Senate Bill 298, sponsored by Republican Sen. Gary Stubblefield of Branch. Democratic Rep. Ashley Hudson of Little Rock voiced her concerns with the bill's language which says some federal gun control laws are unconstitutional.

News01

0:21

"...constitutional or not."

But Cleburne County Sheriff Chris Brown argued the bill IS needed to ensure officers have the freedom not to enforce laws they determine are unconstitutional, rather than the courts.

News02

0:17

"...at the end."

The bill passed on a voice vote and now goes to the full House for consideration. If approved by the chamber, it would go to the governor's desk.

A bill that sets minimum housing standards for Arkansas landlords has passed in the Arkansas Senate. By a vote of 28-to-1, with six senators voting present Tuesday, Senate Bill 594 was advanced to the House. It would mandate basic living standards like hot and cold water, electricity, a “functioning roof,” as well as other requirements. Arkansas is currently the only state in the country without a state-established warrant of habitability for rental properties. In presenting the bill, Republican Sen. Jonathan Dismang of Beebe, acknowledged neither tenants-advocates nor landlords are particularly excited about the bill, though no one was against it outright.

NEWS07

:16

“...this bill

What the bill does not include is a way for tenants to seek remedy for any violation other than moving out. If a dwelling does not meet the standards, a tenant may deliver a letter of non-compliance to the landlord. If the tenant is up-to-date on rent and a landlord does not remedy the situation within 30 days, the tenant’s “sole remedy” is to terminate the lease without penalty and receive a refund of any recoverable security deposit.

A bill is heading to Gov. Asa Hutchinson that would implement stricter scrutiny on absentee voting applications in Arkansas. The Senate gave final approval to the bill Tuesday by vote of 27-to-8. House Bill 1715 would change several aspects of absentee voting, including banning county clerks or election officials from distributing absentee ballot applications or ballots voters who have not requested them. It would also require the creation and approval of a uniform voter statement by the Board of Election Commissioners. Election officials would have to compare the signatures of absentee ballot applications with voter registration applications. If they do not match, an absentee ballot would not be mailed. Democratic Sen. Clarke Tucker of Little Rock spoke against the bill. While he said he favored some aspects, like the uniform voter statement, he objected to the signature match requirement.

NEWS08

:17

“...and vote”

In closing for the bill, Republican Sen. Kim Hammer of Benton, spoke on the importance of signature integrity.

NEWS09

:18

“...are addressed”

The bill now goes to the governor, where if signed, will become law.

A bill that would do away with cash bail for misdemeanor charges in Arkansas failed to advance in the state legislature. Members of the House Judiciary Committee today (Tues) did not approve House Bill 1618, sponsored by Democratic Rep. Jay Richardson of Fort Smith. Lonoke County Sheriff John Staley said the current bail system is the best guarantee that people facing charges will return to court.

News04

0:15

“...the larger agencies.”

The bill would have removed the cash bail requirement for most non-violent misdemeanors, allowing people to be released from jail without posting bond. Critics of the bail system have said it disproportionately impacts poorer people who cannot pay to be released from jail while awaiting a court hearing.

In its Monday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 69 new cases; 1,640 active cases; 156 hospitalized, which is down 7 from Sunday; 17 on ventilators, which is unchanged from Sunday; deaths added today, 4, for a total of 5,665; a total of 332,222 cases; PCR tests, 1,494; antigen tests, 93.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are Benton, 18; Washington, 11; and Pulaski, 10.

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

“Our number of active cases and hospitalizations declined again yesterday. Our vaccine numbers are increasing, but we must do more. If you are 16 and older then you are eligible for the vaccine. It is important that our eligible high school students get a dose. Get your vaccine as soon as you can.”

Legal Future – 1

DM/MEH

4/12 MonAM

Another Republican has officially entered the race for Arkansas Attorney General. Last week, Leon Jones, Jr. announced he was running for the position. During an interview with Talk Business and Politics, Jones was asked about his thoughts on recent legislation regarding medical services for the state's transgender youth.

NEWS20 0:11

“...defend those laws.”

Lieutenant Governor Tim Griffin is running against Jones for the Republican nomination. The official “Tim Griffin for Attorney General” Twitter feed includes support for Georgia's controversial new voting laws, and for the anti-abortion movement, but no comments yet about the transgender legislation. No Democrats have formally announced their candidacies. You can hear more from the interview with Jones tonight just after 6 on KUAR.

Legal Future – 2

DM/MEH

4/5 MonAM

Legal challenges to some controversial bills passed by the Arkansas lawmakers are expected soon. The legislature, dominated by Republicans, has passed a number of conservative measures during the session. During an interview on the Arkansas PBS program “Arkansas Week,” Holly Dickson, executive director of the Arkansas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union identified the top court priority for the group.

NEWS21 0:13

“...gender-affirming care.”

Bills regarding transgender youth participation in school sports and pronouns used by teachers when referring to transgender students are also making their way through the legislature.

State lawmakers today (Mon) heard testimony on a bill that would bar people from using restrooms not aligning with their biological sex in most public facilities. Members of the House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committee today (Mon) ultimately did not vote on House Bill 1882, sponsored by Republican Rep. Cindy Crawford of Fort Smith. Crawford said the bill requires alternate bathroom facilities to be provided if requested.

News01

0:14

“...your male bathrooms.”

The bill would apply to buildings owned, leased or otherwise under the control of a government entity, including public schools, universities and public parks. Republican Rep. Jim Dotson of Bentonville said the bill represents too much government intrusion into private life.

News02

0:14

“...people’s birth certificates?”

Numerous parks and tourism officials spoke against the bill, citing the cost of constructing new bathroom facilities and a possible loss in tourism revenue from events choosing to relocate in response to the legislation. Committee chair Dwight Tosh, a Republican of Jonesboro, called for a fiscal impact statement on the bill to be presented to the committee before lawmakers can vote on it.

Teacher Salaries 1 MEH 4/12 (Mon PM & Tues AM)

Many Arkansas teachers will be getting pay raises. Governor Asa Hutchinson was joined by educators and some lawmakers today (Mon) for a bill signing ceremony. He praised the legislation, which raises the median salary by \$2,000...

News15 0:20 "...State of Arkansas."

The target median salary for teachers will now be just under \$52-thousand dollars. The legislation allocates up to \$25 million dollars to create a Teacher Salary Equalization Fund which will provide \$185 dollars per student in districts that are below the median salary. Hutchinson said the bill is one of several he has signed this year aimed at improving education in the state.

Teacher Salaries 2A & 2B MEH 4/12 (Mon PM & Tues AM)

The median salary for Arkansas teachers will be increasing by \$2,000. That's according to legislation signed into law today (Mon) by Governor Asa Hutchinson. The target median salary will now be just under \$52-thousand dollars.

News16 0:17 "...in the state."

The governor was joined for a bill signing ceremony by educators like El Dorado Superintendent Jim Tucker. He said this will help address a longtime problem for the district.

News17 0:16 "...be raising salaries."

The legislation allocates up to \$25 million dollars to create a Teacher Salary Equalization Fund which will provide \$185 dollars per student in districts that are below the median salary. Two years ago, legislation was signed into law increasing the starting salaries for Arkansas teachers.

Kids' College returns to Texarkana College for summer 2021

Texarkana College is gearing up for another Kids' College this summer for kids ages 7-12. Students who enroll can participate in a wide range of different classes including Journalism, Karate Kids, Introduction to Culinary Arts, CSI Kidz, Mad Science, Ready Set Create, Athletic Games and more.

Kids' College was started in 1993 as part of the Community and Business Education Division.

"For more than 25 years, Texarkana College has provided thousands of kids from grades 2-6 the opportunity to make lasting summer memories designing robots, solving crimes, exploring creative art, engaging in cooking classes, and more all while discovering new friendships in a fun and welcoming educational environment," said Mendy Sharp, Executive Director of Community and Business Education, in a news release.

Kids' College is a two-week summer enrichment program for children in grades 2-6. Kids' College programs engage youth in creative activities that build artistic and academic skills, develop discipline, enhance problem-solving skills and decision making, and create a sense of achievement and personal worth. This program brings together a diverse group of children who want to expand their learning experience on a college campus.

"We are excited again this year to have such talented and skilled Instructor's from our college and our community leading the learning and discovery at Kids' College," Sharp said. "We have recruited a team of teachers who have experience and expertise in their field and a passion for teaching and sharing their art with students of all ages."

Kids' College classes will be held June 7 -10 and June 14 -17 with morning and afternoon sessions. Each class will last for one week, Monday through Thursday, although children may take two classes per day. The morning session will be 9 a.m. - 11 a.m., and the afternoon session will be 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Registration for classes is available through the TC Community and Business Education Center online portal at <https://cbe.texarkanacollege.edu/kidscollege/>.

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

In its Thursday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 199 new cases; 1,707 active cases; 141 hospitalized, which is down 9 from Wednesday; 23 on ventilators, which is up 3 from Wednesday; deaths added today, 2, for a total of 5,662; a total of 331,704 cases; PCR tests, 5,385; antigen tests, 1,066.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are Pulaski, 31; Washington, 26; and Benton, 19.

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

“Vaccine doses administered have increased by nearly 154,000 since this time last week. Our hospitalizations and new cases continue to decline, but it's important that we continue to get vaccinated to protect our fellow Arkansans.”

Legislation that some are categorizing as a hate crimes bill, while others say it's not specific enough, is one vote away from passage in the Arkansas Legislature. The House Judiciary Committee on Thursday advanced Senate Bill 622. Under the legislation, people convicted of a violent felony and are found to be seeking out victims who are part of a "recognizable and identifiable group or class," must serve at least 80% of their sentences. However, the bill does not use the term "hate crimes." Some critics of this bill, who backed the original hate crimes bill that was filed earlier in session, say it is important to name the groups and identities that are statistically more common victims of hate crimes. In presenting the bill to the committee, House Speaker and bill sponsor Rep. Matthew Shepherd rebuffed claims it was not "a serious piece of legislation" and said the broader language strengthens the bill compared to laws in other states.

NEWS08**:20****"...the board"**

Democratic Rep. Tippi McCullough of Little Rock, spoke against the bill, saying because it protects everyone, it does not define the people who are most hated.

NEWS09**:16****"...discriminatory behavior"**

A close voice vote ultimately advanced the bill, though Committee Chair Republican Rep. Carol Dalby of Texarkana, who is also a co-sponsor of the bill, adjourned the meeting before a roll call. The bill now goes to the House for a full vote, which could come as early as Monday. Gov. Asa Hutchinson has expressed support for it.

Arkansas lawmakers have failed to pass a bill that would lengthen prison sentences for felons convicted of a firearms charge. Members of the House Judiciary committee today (Thurs) rejected Senate Bill 300, sponsored by Republican Sen. Jonathan Dismang of Beebe. The bill would make people with a previous conviction for a violent felony ineligible for parole if convicted of possessing a firearm. White County Sheriff Philip Miller said the change would help reduce violent crimes.

News01

0:21

“...additional violent offenses.”

Some lawmakers voiced concerns that eliminating parole for certain offenses could lead to prison overcrowding, and a possible rise in behavioral problems within correctional facilities. Republican Rep. Jimmy Gazaway of Paragould said the bill would make Arkansas sentencing laws even more strict than federal guidelines.

News02

0:19

“...on the budget.”

The bill initially passed on a voice vote, but later failed on a roll call vote. While seven members voted in favor of it and only four voted against, seven other committee members ultimately did not vote on the measure.

Fentanyl Bill 1

DJB/MEH

4/8/2021(ThursPM/FriAM)

The Arkansas House Judiciary committee has advanced a bill enhancing penalties for possessing, delivering or manufacturing heroin and fentanyl. Lawmakers voted unanimously in favor of House Bill 1878 in a meeting today (Thurs). The bill's sponsor, Republican Rep. Jimmy Gazaway of Paragould, said it's necessary to re-classify both drugs within the state's criminal code due to the danger they pose to users.

News04

0:25

"...dangerous it was."

The bill would add heroin to a special classification of drugs in state law, along with cocaine and methamphetamine. It would also create a separate classification solely for fentanyl, requiring people to be charged with a felony for possessing any amount of the drug. The bill now goes to the full House for a vote.

Flag Burning Bill 1

DJB/MEH

4/8/2021(ThursPM/FriAM)

An Arkansas legislative committee has, for a second time, failed to pass a bill that would make it a crime to burn an American flag. The House Judiciary committee today (Thurs) voted against House Bill 1014, sponsored by Republican Rep. Johnny Rye of Trumann, less than a month after the bill failed in the same committee. Democratic Rep. Nicole Clowney of Fayetteville said the bill would restrict the right to free speech.

News05

0:16

"...be a 'no.'"

Rye had previously amended his bill to remove language that would make desecrating an American flag a misdemeanor offense. Instead, people found guilty would have faced a fine of up to \$1-thousand dollars. Similar state and federal laws have been struck down by the U-S Supreme Court as unconstitutional.

A bill that would extend prison sentences for Arkansans convicted of deliberately targeting people in recognizable groups for violent crimes is heading to the House for a final vote. On Thursday, the House Judiciary committee – by a close voice vote – advanced Senate Bill 622. Critics of the legislation say it is too broad a replacement for a hate crimes bill that failed to pass a Senate committee earlier in the week. In particular, some say legislation should include a list of identifiable characteristics, like religion or race, which are commonly reasons for a hate crime. In presenting the bill, House Speaker Matthew Shepherd addressed concerns that the bill is not specific enough.

NEWS06**:11****“...this bill”**

Four members of the public spoke against the bill, with three wanting a more intentional and specific bill addressing hate crimes, while another was against hate crimes legislation as a whole. One person spoke for it. Democratic Rep. Vivian Flowers of Pine Bluff spoke against the bill, citing the need for it to name groups that are routinely the victims of hate crimes, as opposed to having non-specific language.

NEWS07**:27****“..to rethink”**

The bill passed by a voice vote. However, Republican Rep. and House Judiciary Chair Carol Dalby quickly adjourned after calling the vote. She did not allow a roll call vote, despite several members requesting one, saying the meeting was adjourned. The bill now goes to the House where it could be voted on as early as Monday.

Romero 1A & 1B

MEH

4/8 (Thurs PM & Fri AM)

Dr. Jose Romero will remain in his position as Arkansas health secretary. The state Senate made that decision today (Thurs), but not before a heated debate about his performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some, like Republican Senator Jason Rapert of Conway, accused Romero of taking unnecessary steps that impacted small businesses.

News15 0:30 “...them accountable whatsoever.”

Rapert also objected that Romero did not show up to speak during the hearing. But others like Democratic Senator Stephanie Flowers of Pine Bluff said given the uncertainty, Romero did the best job he could.

News16 0:22 “...a hundred years.”

25 of the Senate’s 35 members voted to confirm Romero to remain as head of the Department of Health. The debate included an ongoing theme of some senators accusing the executive branch of wielding too much power during this health emergency. Romero was appointed to the position by Gov. Asa Hutchinson.

Texas Department of Public Safety Sgt. Gregg Williams confirmed Thursday morning that the body of 23-year-old Armando Valdez has been recovered.

Valdez was the driver of a 2000 GMC Yukon that plunged from the roadway and into Lake Wright Patman spillway Sunday evening.

The body of Valdez was found about 9:30 a.m. Thursday, said Game Warden Shawn Hervey. "He was just down river from where it happened. He didn't even make it to Highway 59."

Game wardens and dive teams had been trying to find Valdez practically around the clock since Sunday night's accident.

"We were back out at first light. All day, every day," Hervey said. "It's tragic and our hearts and prayers go out to this family."

At noon Wednesday, The Corp of Engineers decided to resume water flow through the spillway. The gates were reopened in order to prevent flooding.

The victim's wife, Lucia Mendoza, 29, of Texarkana was rescued from the water by Dustin Roach of Ashdown, Arkansas. Roach saw the vehicle go into the water and jumped in to help, according to social media reports.

Roach has also started a GoFundMe account for Lucia Mendoza.

"I witnessed a tragic accident at Wright Patman Spill Way on Easter Sunday. However, God showed up and I was blessed to be able to save Lucia's life," he wrote on the GoFundMe account.

"Sadly, she did lose her husband that day and she will soon be hit with hospital and funeral expenses," he wrote.

Recovery efforts continue | Another vehicle found in water, but not connected

TEXARKANA, Texas — A dive team trying to recover a missing man found a second vehicle Monday down river from where a 2000 GMC Yukon plunged into Wright Patman Lake.

The second vehicle is not believed to be related to the Yukon crash in any way, officials said. The vehicle's make and model were not immediately known.

The Bowie County Sheriff's Office Dive Team and Texas Parks and Wildlife Dive team were still trying to recover the driver of the Yukon on Tuesday.

The Yukon crashed through the barrier of the fence and guard rail and plunged into the Wright Patman Lake spillway on Sunday evening.

A woman in the vehicle, Lucia Mendoza, 29, of Texarkana was rescued from the water by a man who witnessed the crash.

The water was estimated to be about 27 to 30 feet deep when the vehicle went into the lake, according to the U.S. Corps of Engineers.

The Texas Department of Public Safety, Cass County Sheriff's Office and several local fire department have also been involved in the search and investigation.

Creationism Bill 1

DJB/MEH

4/6/21(TuesPM/WedAM)

Arkansas lawmakers have advanced a bill that would allow educators to teach the religious theory known as Creationism in public schools. Members of the House Education Committee today (Tues) passed House Bill 1701, sponsored by Republican Rep. Mary Bentley of Perryville. Julie McDonald was the only member of the public to speak against the bill.

News01

0:16

“...faith wasn’t needed.”

Creationism is the belief that the universe and living organisms were formed by acts of divine creation, as described in the Bible, rather than natural processes like evolution. Bentley said the bill is necessary after hearing from teachers in her district. Teaching creationism in schools has been banned since the U-S Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional in 1987. The bill now goes to the full House for a vote.

Minority Populations 1 AB/MEH 04/06/2021 (TuesPM & WedAM)

With vaccine eligibility expanding, Governor Asa Hutchinson is calling for more vaccinations to be administered in communities of color. At his weekly press briefing today (Tues), Hutchinson said 77 percent of vaccines are going to white Arkansans, while only 10 percent of vaccines are going to Black Arkansans. Dr. Michelle Smith, Director of Health Equity, said health equity strike teams were developed to ensure minority populations have access to vaccine distribution sites.

News11 0:16 “...broad population immunity.”

Smith says there is a goal of 8-thousand vaccines being administered to at least 50 percent or more of minorities for this month. She said the goal will be achieved with the help of vaccine providers such as UAMS and Blue Cross Blue Shield. Shorter College will hold a mass vaccination clinic tomorrow (Wed) from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Smith says this will be one of many opportunities for special communities to get vaccinated.

Minority Populations 2 AB/MEH 04/06/2021 (TuesPM & WedAM)

Arkansas’ minority communities are receiving less vaccines compared to the state’s overall population. Governor Asa Hutchinson emphasized at his weekly press briefing today (Tues) that the state has to overcome historic reservations of vaccine hesitancy and the racial inequity of its distribution. Dr. Marlene Battle with the D and D Pharmacy said she partnered with health equity strike teams to ensure every Arkansan has the opportunity to get vaccinated.

News12 0:25 “...getting the vaccine.”

Governor Hutchinson said in speaking with the White House Coronavirus Task Force today (Tues), he learned about \$5 billion dollars will be allocated nationally which will help fund minority outreach programs in the state.

Trans Schools 1

DJB/MEH

4/6/21(TuesPM/WedAM)

A bill that would allow teachers to deliberately misgender trans and gender non-binary students has advanced in the Arkansas Legislature. Members of the House Education Committee approved House Bill 1749 in a meeting today (Tues). The bill's sponsor, Republican Rep. Mary Bentley of Perryville, said the legislation seeks to help teachers avoid confusion.

News02

0:20

"...school that year."

The bill requires educators and school staff to address students with pronouns matching their biological sex as displayed on their school registration form. Democratic Rep. Fred Love of Little Rock said actions like strengthening teachers' unions would do more to help educators than requiring them to use pronouns not aligning with students' gender identity.

News03

0:13

"...to the utmost."

The bill passed on a vote of 11 for and six against, with three members not voting. It now goes to the full House for a vote.

A bill that would have stripped businesses of the ability to mandate its employees receive an FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccine failed to pass an Arkansas House committee on Tuesday. By a voice vote, the House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee did not advance House Bill 1547. Under the legislation, if a vaccine is approved under the Food and Drug Administration, employers cannot require employees to receive it until at least two years after it received regulatory approval. All three currently available vaccines are available for distribution under emergency use authorization after passing clinical trials. In presenting her bill, Republican Rep. Robin Lundstrum of Springdale, said she was not anti-vaccine.

NEWS06**:21****“...use it”**

Representatives both from the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Health testified against the bill. In addition to the restrictions under the proposed legislation, employees who resign from their jobs due to not wanting a vaccine would be allowed to apply for unemployment benefits. Democratic Rep. Deborah Ferguson of West Memphis expressed concern over that aspect of the bill.

NEWS07**:19****“...quit work”**

The bill failed to gain enough support to advance it. It could be brought up before the committee again.

A bill that would have banned businesses in the state from mandating its employees get COVID-19 vaccinations has failed in a House committee. House Bill 1547, which would make employers wait years after a vaccine has been officially approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration before requiring its employees to get it, failed to receive the needed support from the House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee to move on to the House. Currently all three available vaccinations are available through an emergency authorization from the FDA. The bill also makes COVID-19 vaccines not required in order to enroll in a school or early learning center, as a condition for employment or in order to obtain a licensure, certificate or permit. The bill would sunset, or cease to impose restrictions, two years after the FDA approves of the COVID-19 immunization or vaccine on a non-emergency basis. Before the committee voted on the bill, Republican Rep. John Payton of Wilburn, spoke on why he was supporting it.

NEWS08**:17****“...endorse it”**

“The idea that an employer would enforce an employee to take it against their will, I think is wrong. We’re not talking about a drug that is proven. It’s not even proven to the point that the FDA is willing to endorse it,” Payton said.

According to information from the Centers for Disease Control, all three COVID-19 vaccinations “met FDA’s rigorous scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality needed to support emergency use authorization.”

Republican Rep. Justin Boyd of Fort Smith, spoke against the bill.

NEWS09**:25****“...that’s unnecessary”**

“This is a major mandate on business, and we don’t have a crystal ball. We don’t know what’s gonna happen. We don’t know if this is going to be an ongoing vaccine or not. And for us as a legislature to micromanage something with businesses that we can’t come back, without the governor calling a special session, in two years. I just think that that’s unnecessary,” Boyd said.

Although it failed, the bill could be brought up again to the committee.

Veto Override 1A & 1B

DJB/MEH

4/6/21(TuesPM/WedAM)

The Arkansas Legislature has successfully overridden Gov. Asa Hutchinson's veto of a law banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors. Members of the House and Senate both voted today (Tues) to override the governor's veto of House Bill 1570, sponsored by Republican Rep. Robin Lundstrum of Springdale. Democratic Sen. Clarke Tucker of Little Rock spoke against the override in the Senate, shortly after the effort succeeded in the House.

News33 0:14 "...learn from it."

Later in the day, Governor Hutchinson reacted to the override during an interview on NPR's All Things Considered.

News16 0:26 "...signal to them."

The bill threatens physicians with licensure penalties and legal action for providing gender-based care to trans minors, including hormone therapy and surgery. The American Civil Liberties Union said in a statement the group will attempt to block the measure in court before it becomes law this summer.

TEXARKANA, Texas — The Literacy Council of Bowie and Miller Counties' annual Spelling Bee is B-A-C-K in early May, pitting local teams against each other for a coveted trophy and the glory of spelling.

The Literacy Council fundraiser, which was canceled last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, returns at 6 p.m. on Saturday, May 8, at Texarkana College's Truman Arnold Center. This year, teams will congregate to compete while team supporters and the public can watch online.

Literacy Council Executive Director Jenny Walker says the bee will look a bit different than it has in the past. Teams can register through April 30.

"Usually it's a big, lively event with audience participation and all kinds of stuff. However, we're still very cautious about a large group, so we're going to livestream the event for a virtual audience, and the only people who will be in actual attendance in person will be our team members," Walker said.

The teams will be spread out at the bee. The Literacy Council is working with TigerVision at Texas High School for the livestream.

Several corporate sponsorship packages are available, which range from the Bronze Bee at \$250 and the Silver Bee at \$350, the latter including one bee team sponsorship, to Presenting Bee at \$3,000, which includes 10 virtual audience tickets, preferred seating, up to three team sponsorships and more.

Although the Literacy Council added some other fundraisers this past year, the Spelling Bee has been missed financially. They lost about \$20,000 without a bee, and with a yearly budget around \$100,000 that's a large percentage missing.

A bill that would require longer sentences for Arkansans who commit violent crimes against people who belong to a “recognizable and identifiable group or class” of people is on its way to the Senate. By a voice vote, the Senate Judiciary Committee advanced Senate Bill 622 on Monday. People convicted of a “serious felony involving violence” such as murder, aggravated assault or terroristic threatening against someone due to some aspect of their identity, would not be eligible for parole until they served at least 80% of their sentence.

Though the bill does not mention the term “hate crimes,” many, including the state’s governor, see this as another attempt to establish stricter laws against those who commit hate crimes. A previously filed hate crimes bill has stalled. Speaking earlier on Monday on the bill, Governor Asa Hutchinson said he hoped the Senate Judiciary committee would pass the bill.

NEWS07**:13****“...who they are”**

Critics of the bill say it does not go far enough to protect marginalized groups such as members of the LGBTQ community, from hate crimes, while others believe the legislation is not needed at all. Jerry Cox with the conservative group Family Council, spoke against the need for such legislation in committee

NEWS08**:18****“...so forth”**

Randy Zook, with the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce, spoke in favor of the bill saying Arkansas not having hate crimes legislation is harming efforts to recruit businesses to the state. The bill now goes to the full Senate for a vote.

Host Copy

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson yesterday held a press conference to announce that he's vetoed a bill passed by the Arkansas legislature — the first of its kind — to bar gender-affirming medical care for minors.

Jacqueline Froelich reports.

Republican Governor Asa Hutchinson says he's spent the last week investigating the impact of "Save Adolescents From Experimentation" or "SAFE Act" if he were to sign it into law.

A1: I was told this week that ... veto HB 1570."

Hutchinson has spent the last week meeting with transgender Arkansans, their families, activists, and medical providers to better understand.

A6: "It's undisputed that the population of minors who struggle with gender dysphoria is an extreme minority ... their family has chosen."

V3 Hutchinson warns passing the SAFE Act will set a bad precedent.

Asa1b: "House Bill 1570 would put the state as the definitive oracle of medical care overriding parents, patients and health care experts ... vast government overreach."

V4 Hutchinson says the law could cause real harm to Arkansas trans youth he learned number around 200.

A2: "HB1570 is opposed by leading medical ... to increased drug use."

V5 The governor says he's learned from medical providers

Hemingway TW MEH 4/5 – 4:44 p.m.

(Self-contained two-way)

News15 5:59 “...KUAR, 89.1.”

Tonight, PBS premieres part one of a three part documentary on Ernest Hemingway. The iconic literary figure spent time in northeast Arkansas along with his second wife Pauline Pfeiffer. Today property in Piggott has been restored as part of the Arkansas Heritage Sites program by Arkansas State University.

Dr. Ruth Hawkins is the former director of the program and the restoration of the house was the first project taken on. She is also author of a book about Hemingway and his second marriage called “Unbelievable Happiness and Final Sorrow...”

An Arkansas Senate committee has advanced a bill that some are defining as hate crime legislation, while others say it does not go far enough. KUAR's politics reporter Sarah Kellogg reports.

NEWS06

1:57

SOC

Under Senate Bill 622, felons who are convicted of a "serious felony" involving violence and in an aggravating circumstance, which is defined as the defendant purposely seeking out a victim because they are a member of a "recognizable and identifiable group or class" who share characteristics, would face extended jail sentences in that they would be required to serve at least 80% of their sentence. The Senate Judiciary committee, by a voice vote, has advanced the bill.

Though it does not mention the phrase "hate crimes," the bill is perceived as an attempt to institute greater penalties to those who are convicted of committing hate crimes against people due to some aspect of their identity, be it race, religion, sexual orientation or other characteristics. Arkansas is currently one of three states without such legislation.

The bill has garnered criticism, with some saying the bill does not go far enough to protect vulnerable populations in the state and others saying the bill's language could be considered too far-reaching. A previously filed bill was more specific in who would be protected against hate crimes, but has not gained any momentum in the legislature.

Independent Sen. Jim Hendren of Gravette, proposed an amendment to the bill that would have specifically listed groups that he considered to be "traditional victims of hate crimes."

CUT 1**:24****"..these groups"**

"It makes the bill more clear and my hope would be it would make it more bipartisan and more something that appeals to people who are actual victims of hate crimes traditionally, and feel like, this bill is, as you said earlier dancing around, clearly saying that Arkansas will not tolerate crimes against people in these groups," Hendren said.

The amendment was ultimately not adopted due to a lack of action by the committee. In closing for the bill, Senate President Pro Tempore Jimmy Hickey of Texarkana said it will help protect Arkansans.

CUT 2**:10****"...of people"**

"Maybe it's not as shiny as some people would like it to be. But let me tell you this. This is a workhorse bill. It gets the job done. It protects people. It protects classes of people," Hickey said.

The bill now goes to the full Senate for a vote.

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The circumstances of a 2000 GMC Yukon plunging from the roadway and into Lake Wright Patman spillway are unique, an official said Monday.

It is the first time someone has gone through the barriers of a fence and a guard rail into the spillway, Capt. Shawn Hervey of Texas game warden's law enforcement division said during a Monday afternoon press conference.

This is the first time in 21 years something like this has happened, he said.

The body recovery mission continues for a man who officials believe was driving the Yukon when it plunged into the Lake Wright Patman about 6 p.m. Sunday.

The female, who was rescued from the water Sunday when the Yukon went over, 29-year-old Lucia Mendoza, is a Texarkana resident, Sgt. Greg Williams of the Texas Department of Public Safety. She was taken to local hospital with nonlife threatening injuries.

The 2000 GMC Yukon was found about 10:24 p.m. Sunday in the water, Hervey said.

When the Yukon was pulled from the water, the man was not inside.

Clothing was found floating on the water as far as four miles away from the spillway and officials are trying to determine if it is connected to the spillway incident.

Hervey said the water was turned off at the spillway after the accident and it remains off to search for the man.

The water was estimated to be about 27 to 30 feet deep when the car went into the lake, said Matt Seavey, U.S. Corps of Engineers manager, said.

The force of the water may have carried the man upstream from the spillway, he said.

Mask Mandate – 1

DM/

4/5

MonAM

Medical experts in the state are urging Arkansans to continue wearing masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. During an interview on Arkansas PBS this week, Dr. Cam Patterson, chancellor of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, said continuing the mask mandate would reduce the threat posed by COVID-19 variants.

NEWS20 0:18

“...in the pandemic.”

Last week Governor Asa Hutchinson, lifted the state’s mask mandate. Nearly 20 other states have done the same. Data from the Arkansas Department of Health shows the number of positive cases of COVID-19, and the positivity rate of those tested, has declined over the past week in the state. But an increase in cases in other states has many in the medical community concerned about another nationwide surge.

Mask Mandate – 2

DM/

4/5

MonAM

Concern over the spread of more infectious and deadly COVID-19 variants is causing leaders in the Arkansas medical community to encourage continued mask wearing. In an interview for Arkansas PBS this week, Dr. Cam Patterson, chancellor of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, disagreed with Governor Asa Hutchinson’s decision to lift the mask mandate.

NEWS21 0:17

“...cautious and safe.”

Patterson said dangerous mutations, like those first identified in the United Kingdom, can occur in Arkansas because not enough people have been vaccinated. According to the Arkansas Department of Health, more than two thirds of the state has not received even the first dose of any of the approved vaccines.

TEXARKANA, Texas — To bring awareness to April's Child Abuse Prevention Month, all elementary school campuses in the Texarkana Independent School District will be accepting donations of teddy bears and small children's blankets from April 5 to April 30.

Items collected will be donated to area Child Protective Services and Police Departments.

Sherry Nelson, coordinator of student support services, said the district has always recognized child abuse prevention and awareness in the month of April, but that they wanted to take it a step further this year.

She said this is a very pertinent issue to TISD, and that's why they're working so hard to bring awareness.

"Children who are abused or neglected, including those who witness domestic violence, often exhibit emotional, cognitive, and behavioral problems, such as depression, suicidal behavior, difficulty in school, use of alcohol and other drugs, and early sexual activity," Nelson said. "Children who are abused or neglected also are more likely to repeat the cycle of violence by entering into violent relationships as teens and adults or abusing their own children. We have to stop the cycle.

"These are our children. This child could be your neighbor, a member of your soccer team, your student or a fellow church member. If we don't help them, who will?"

TEXARKANA — Local police are concerned about an increase in drug overdoses that may have been caused by pills laced with fentanyl.

"This is a serious and important matter," the Texarkana Arkansas Police Department posted on its Facebook page. "In our surrounding area, there have been several drug overdoses recently. The information that has been gathered suggests the street drugs are being laced with a drug called Fentanyl."

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opiate.

Texarkana, Texas, Police responded to three overdoses Wednesday. A woman died and the other two people are still in critical condition after taking a street drug that had been laced with something else.

Toxicology screens will show for sure what the substance was, said Shawn Vaughn, spokesman for Texarkana Texas Police Department.

It's a very scary situation," Vaughn said. "Anyone buying street drugs needs to be aware of what they are potentially getting."

A Texarkana, Arkansas, resident overdosed in late March and also remains in critical condition, said TAPD spokesman Cpl. Kelly Pilgreen. The criminal investigation division along with the drug task force is putting great effort into this investigation, he said.

TEXARKANA, Texas — The advisory committee tasked with deciding the future manager of the Perot Theatre has reached a decision, according to the Texas-side official overseeing the proposal process.

Robby Robertson, director of the Texarkana, Texas, parks and recreation department, said Thursday that with a decision in hand the city will now work with the selectee on ironing out the details.

The organization chosen has yet to be named.

The Texarkana Regional Arts and Humanities Council, Texarkana Symphony Orchestra and Ames, Iowa-based VenuWorks submitted applications.

Managing the Perot, an historic downtown theater, is done on behalf of the city. About a week ago, each group made in-person presentations to the citizens' committee tasked with making this recommendation to city staff.

Robertson said in January that the RFP process for the Perot is overdue. The current contract was granted in 2012 but was extended for various reasons, he said.

In its Thursday update, the Arkansas Department of Health reported 211 new cases; 1,724 active cases; 168 hospitalized, which is up 2 from Wednesday; 26 on ventilators, which is down 1 from Wednesday; deaths added today, 10, for a total of 5,636; a total of 330,609 cases; PCR tests, 5,632; antigen tests, 1,055.

The Health Department reported that the top counties for new cases are Washington, 26; Benton, 25; and Pulaski, 24.

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

“Today's report shows a record increase in vaccine doses administered. With an increase of nearly 33,000 doses administered since yesterday, we continue to work toward the end of this pandemic. Check with your local vaccination locations to do your part.”

Intro: A proposed law to ban minors from receiving gender-affirming health care, and penalizing medical providers who attempt to deliver it, was approved this week by the Republican-majority Arkansas legislature.

The measure now sits on the Arkansas governor's desk for approval.

OR

The measure was transmitted to the Arkansas governor's desk, which he's signed into law today.

OR

The measure was transmitted to the Arkansas governor's desk. He vetoed the bill, but a majority of legislators are expected to override.

Jacqueline Froelich with KUAF in Fayetteville reports.

Dr. Stephanie Ho is primary care physicians who operates Vector Health and Wellness, in Fayetteville. Treating transgender patients age 12 and older is a routine part of her practice.

S1: "We see minors and adults for gender affirming care."

Currently she's seeing 20 trans youth. Parents must be present during clinical intake and along with patients, provide informed consent.

S2: "Basically gathering of information and talking without parents."

Transgender, or trans for short, describe people whose gender identity is different from the one assigned to them at birth. Trans people's gender expression may begin at a very young age – a little boy may express feminine ways, for example, or a little girl masculine behavior.

trans minors seeking gender affirming medical help may be given certain medications, again with their consent, and parental consent.

S4: For minors of a certain age it's not ... pediatric endocrinologist."

Dr. Ho refers patients to a pediatric endocrinologist at Arkansas Children's Hospital Gender Spectrum Clinic.

Puberty blockers slow down physical development prior to receiving female or male hormone therapy to match gender expression.

EXARKANA, Ark. — After Governor Asa Hutchinson's Tuesday announcement that the statewide mask mandate will not be extended, local school districts on the Arkansas side have been making adjustments — or not.

The Texarkana Arkansas School District announced Tuesday that it will continue to require staff and students to wear masks for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, unless the board of directors makes a formal decision to modify policy. The same goes for Ashdown School District.

The Genoa Central School District, on the other hand, is only recommending students and staff to wear masks. If a student or staff member doesn't want to wear one, they don't have to.

"Genoa Central will continue cleaning and disinfecting to maintain healthy facilities," according to a Facebook post from the district's page . "The district also promotes good hand hygiene such as hand washing and respiratory etiquette."

The Genoa Central school board is scheduled to meet on April 12 and may consider adjustments then.

The Gazette reached out to Superintendent Garry Jameson for comment on the matter, but received no response.

ADVERTISING

Texarkana Arkansas has been named the best Arkansas city to retire in by Insurify, a company that compares homeowner's insurance.

Insurify analyzed both proprietary and public data to identify the best cities to retire in 2021. They rated U.S. cities based on a composite score of factors comprising real estate affordability, life expectancy, accessibility to health care, low rates of property crime and violent crime, and driver and pedestrian safety.

Texarkana Arkansas Mayor Allen Brown called the news a great honor for Texarkana.

"It certainly makes you happy when your hometown is recognized in such a positive way," he said. "But it should be no surprise to those of us who have chosen Texarkana as our home. In addition to the data points used to qualify Texarkana, we also have Southern charm with friendly, welcoming citizens," Brown said.

Cpl. Kelly Pilgreen, spokesman for the Texarkana Arkansas Police Department said the rating is also not a surprising one to the TAPD.

"This is a good place to retire. Texarkana is very community-oriented and there are a lot of activities for people who no longer work," he said.

TEXARKANA, TX— The Bowie County/City of Texarkana, Texas Joint Operations Center for COVID-19 remains functional but does not operate daily at this time.. To locate a vaccine site nearby, visit <https://www.vaccines.gov/>.

While local officials continue to monitor case counts, and stay updated on CDC guidelines, individuals are encouraged to follow the advice of their primary care physician and stay current on recommendations from the CDC for ways to stay healthy: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Locally, Texas DSHS reports a total of 4,712 confirmed positive COVID-19 cases, and 2,216 probable cases with 211 deaths. The Department of State Health Services is reporting 48 active cases currently in Bowie County.

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