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Marijuana Legalization Fails



Dine with an Italian Count at Benvenuto



Caravel Girls Win State

PHOTO BY SIK IMAGERY



HEADLINES

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MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION FAILS AFTER STUNNING SERIES OF EVENTS, POLITICAL MANEUVERING



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The bill to legalize recreational marijuana in Delaware came to a stunning end in the House of Representatives when it failed after a series of events:

- A two-hour-long recess was called by Speaker of the House Pete Schwartzkopf so the Democratic caucus could meet.
- Rep. Jeff Spiegelman, a Republican who previously signaled support for legalization, announced that he would not be voting because of a conflict of interest. He did not elaborate.
- Rep. Mike Smith, a Republican who had publicly stated that he would be voting for the bill, introduced four amendments, three of which failed. He did it, he said, to “prove that [Democrats] do not care about bipartisanship” and then withdrew his support.

- A hastily conducted roll call fell short by two votes.
- The bill’s sponsor, Rep. Ed Osieski, waited too long to switch his vote from yes to no. That would have allowed him to bring the bill back to the floor later in the legislative session.

The bill needed a 3/5 majority, or 25 votes, to pass. It received 23 yes votes and 14 no votes with 4 not voting. A House rule would have allowed the bill to be reintroduced later in the legislative session by any representative who voted against the measure. For that reason, Osieski attempted to change his vote from yes to no after the roll call ended, but before Schwartzkopf banged his gavel.

Osieski spoke up too late. Here’s the exchange:

Osieski: “Mr. Speaker—I was going to change my yes vote to a no.”

Schwartzkopf: “Little late now. Can’t do it now.”

House Majority Leader Valerie Longhurst: “Can we rescind the roll call?”

Schwartzkopf: “Huh?”

Longhurst: “Can I rescind the roll call?”

Schwartzkopf: “You don’t need to.”

Longhurst: “Can’t rescind it?”

Schwartzkopf: “You can’t do it. They’ve already called it down.”

Multiple members asked aloud if the roll call could be rescinded. Others said it couldn’t because the vote had already concluded and Schwartzkopf’s gavel was down.

That means that for the bill to be reintroduced in 2022, either a Republican or Schwartzkopf—who did not vote for the bill—would have to reintroduce it. That seems unlikely to happen.

Schwartzkopf announced that the House would recess until 2 p.m. Tuesday.

In a press release after the session, Osieski said “For the past several years, the majority of Delawareans have been clear that they support legalizing recreational marijuana for adult users. We have heard from numerous members of the public—advocates, veterans, retired law enforcement officers, educators and even faith leaders—who have overwhelmingly voiced support for legalizing adult recreational marijuana.”

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CANNABIS LEGALIZATION MAY RETURN FOR A VOTE IN 2022, SPONSOR SAYS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

It may not be the end of the line for recreational marijuana legalization in Delaware.

While Rep. Ed Osienski's **House Bill 305** was defeated in the House of Representatives after a stunning series of events Thursday, the Newark Democrat said he's still hopeful that cannabis prohibition could come to an end in 2022. "I hope there's still a path forward," he said in an interview with Delaware LIVE News. "I've got to be optimistic."

One way he said it could happen is with a bill that would only require a simple majority, or 21 votes, to pass.

Thursday's bill needed 3/5 of the 41-member House because it sought to establish new fees on potential marijuana sales and licenses. That comes out to 25 votes—23 representatives voted yes, 14 voted no, and 4 did not vote. No Republican supported the bill.

Two Republicans—Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, and Rep. Jeff Spiegelman, R-Clayton—had both signaled support for legalization. Smith had even told colleagues and advocates that he planned to vote for the bill.

Then, Smith introduced four amendments at the last minute. The amendments, among other things, sought

to make changes to who would be eligible for growing, selling and testing licenses depending on their criminal history. Only one of the four amendments passed, prompting Smith to say Democrats would be to blame for the bill's demise.

"I came here today to vote for the legalization of marijuana," Smith said. "I went to roll call on those amendments just to prove that you guys do not care about bipartisanship—and this state needs to change."

"I hope people remember this moment because you killed the legalization of marijuana."

Osienski said he was surprised that Smith decided to move forward with the amendments. Other legislators had approached him and asked if the changes Smith was proposing could be made.

"I explained that they could be problematic in my caucus, but I've always been willing to work to come to some sort of compromise so I could get the legislation passed," Osienski said. "Naturally, I said I would be supportive if it would get this bill over the finish line."

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Cancer isn't waiting for COVID-19 to be over.

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BRIDGEVILLE NATURAL GAS FACILITY WOULD PUT KIDS AT RISK, OPPONENTS SAY

property in the surrounding area. “The gas is not treated or handled in any way here other than to offload it for direct injection into our pipeline system,” Parker said. “Instead of accepting gas through a pipeline, it accepts gas from a virtual pipeline—or a truck.” Gas would not be released into the atmosphere, he said.

Efforts were unsuccessful Thursday to reach Woodbridge School District and Eastern Shore Natural Gas for comment.

The proposal includes a six-foot-tall alarmed fence, a remote security system that would be monitored 24/7, and a closing security gate. “We take very seriously safety at all times,” Parker concluded.

Greg Layton, an organizer with Food and Water Watch, said in an interview with Delaware/Town Square LIVE News that the proposal jeopardizes the safety of children at Phillis Wheatley and further entrenches the fossil fuel industry in Delaware. As many as 18 gas trucks would be added to the road each day—a recipe for potential disaster, Layton said.

He refers to the trucks as “bomb trucks,” because they have a history of crashing and exploding. “It doesn’t happen often but it did happen just last month in New York,” he said, referring to a Feb. 16 incident in which a tanker truck overturned and exploded in Long Island. “The industry itself recognizes that they’re potentially dangerous,” Layton said.

Parker indicated during the Feb. 10 meeting that the company could come back to council later and ask to expand the site, which Layton said would result in even more explosive trucks driving through Bridgeville. Eastern Shore Natural Gas has agreed to bring trucks in using a route that does not go past the elementary school.

The proposal also invited charges of environmental racism during the meeting.

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Sussex County’s Planning and Zoning Commission decided March 10 to allow a Bridgeville project to proceed that would put a natural gas offloading station within 1,300 feet of an elementary school. The commission deferred action on Eastern Shore Natural Gas’ conditional use request during a Feb. 10 meeting after numerous members of the public objected to the proposal.

Opponents say the risk of explosions is a major concern, especially given the site’s proximity to Phillis Wheatley Elementary School, which has about 600 students. They also have concerns about the environmental impact of the proposal, the potential for increased traffic and noise, and the fact that many residents in the surrounding area are minorities.

The Chesapeake Utilities subsidiary currently operates a compressor station on the property. If approved, the company would construct above-ground terminals where trucks, which they refer to as a “virtual pipeline,” would offload gas from non-traditional sources. The gas would then end up in the regional pipeline.

The proposed offloading station would be located at 17035 Black Cherry Drive in Bridgeville. It would sit about 1,300 feet away from the elementary school and less than 1,100 feet away from the playground.

Mark Parker, engineering manager at Eastern Shore Natural Gas, said during last month’s meeting that the station would not present a significant risk to people or

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TWO CHRISTINA BOARD MEMBERS TO REVISIT CHARTER MORATORIUM REQUEST

BY JAREK RUTZ

Two Christina School Board members have asked the board to revisit its request for a moratorium on new charter schools in the state.

Dr. Naveed Baqir, who voted against the moratorium, spoke out against it during the March 8 board meeting. Board member Donald Patton, who also voted against the moratorium, plans to provide support for Baqir during his presentation.

Patton said he believes that the motion to pass it was rooted in the district's fear of losing students to charter schools. He said 7,434 students have left Christina School District over the past year to attend school elsewhere.

Efforts were unsuccessful to reach other school board members or the system's public information officer.

Four members voted Feb. 8 to pass the moratorium,

which would also prohibit the expansion of existing charter schools. Baqir and Patton voted against it. One member was not present.

Baqir believes the board is sending the message that if they had their way, they would shut down other schools.

"It is important that we compete on the merit of our own accomplishments and achievements," said Baqir. "We aren't perfect. We have deficiencies and we can work on them." Baqir called the vote "100% political theater."

For one thing, he said, Christina's School Board's vote means nothing unless a legislator adopts their statewide moratorium request and turns it into a bill that passes the Legislature and is signed by the governor. That has not happened in the month since their vote.

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CULTURE

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'BLUE DOOR,' 'OTHER WORLD:' 2 RIVETING THEATER EXPERIENCES

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware theatergoers have a choice of two spectacular performances this week, one in Newark and one in Wilmington. Both “The Blue Door” by the University of Delaware’s professional Resident Ensemble Performers and Delaware Theatre Company’s “Other World,” a musical making its world premiere, offer enthralling performances and breathtaking sets.

“The Blue Door,” which ends Sunday, is the first indoor performance by the University of Delaware theater since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. It follows a single sleepless night in the life of a Black mathematician whose wife has left him because he wouldn’t join the Million Man March in Washington, D.C.

Sanford Robbins, producing artistic director of the ensemble players, said the play was chosen because its

subject matter is timely, considering the national discussions on race, and it was a smaller show, with two actors and a single set. “It was so easily producible because we were coming back after two years, and with a much smaller staff than we had,” he said.

“Other World,” which ends March 20, is a fantasy about a gaming addict and a gaming hater who are mysteriously transported into his favorite game and have to play their way out. The look of the show—which includes a dragon, three-story tall costumes and more—evolved from early concept art created by Wētā Workshop, the same company that did the special effects in “Lord of the Rings” and “Avatar” movies.

Its cast is deliberately diverse in both ethnicity and abilities, yet the show never comments on that.

“Other World” is the third of Delaware Theatre Company’s indoor season, and Managing Director Matt Silva said he hopes it will help develop new audiences. DTC discovered the show at read-throughs in New York City more than two years ago.

Theaters talk a lot about new audience development, but continue to show the same old dead white man productions or pat themselves on the back for including a more modern piece written by and featuring people of color. “Other World” explores the ideas of community, life balance and more set against the gaming world. It’s a brand new idea ripped from modern trends, but reflecting a lot of issues and viewpoints, Silva said.

“If we want to talk about new audience development and reaching out to our community and building community programming, something like this is really important to do,” Silva said.

The delight on March 5 of the kids sitting on the front row gaping at a giant puppet dragon stretching off the stage over their heads, couldn’t have underscored that better.

Both shows also involve performers with Broadway pedigrees, actors playing multiple roles and sets that suck you in. Both those sets make marvelous use of video technology.

In “The Blue Door,” Stephanie Hansen has created a Zen sandbox of a set that contrasts the emotional action on stage. A rustic-looking four-poster bed to the left serves as the bedroom for Lewis, the professor whose White wife has left him. It appears to be open out to a sandy beach dune.

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ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE RETURNS TO WILMINGTON THIS SATURDAY



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Irish Culture Club of Delaware's popular St. Patrick's Day Parade and Hooley returned to Downtown Wilmington on Saturday, March 12. The event was canceled in 2020 and 2021 because of the pandemic.

"The Irish have a long, proud history in Wilmington dating back centuries, and the community continues to thrive to this day," said Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki.

"We're eager to once again welcome families, neighbors, and friends from around the city, state, and region to our thriving Downtown district for the parade and party atmosphere," he said. "And while here, please take time to patronize our many other local attractions and restaurants."

The free, family-friendly parade kicks off at 4th and King Streets in downtown Wilmington began at 12 p.m. on Saturday. Floats, marching bands, dancers and more will proceed up King Street, continue past the Parade Grandstand at Rodney Square and end near 14th Street where the Post-Parade Hooley will be held.

The Parade took about one hour and the Hooley will ended around 3 p.m.

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DO MORE 24 SETS ANOTHER FUNDRAISING RECORD FOR DELAWARE NONPROFITS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

In just 24 hours, Delawareans raised nearly \$2.7 million for nonprofit organizations throughout the state as part of the annual “Do More 24” fundraising effort.

Sponsored by United Way of Delaware and Spur Impacts, Do More 24 is a one-day online charitable giving extravaganza designed to showcase the work of Delaware’s nonprofit organizations and ignite a culture of community-wide giving.

Among the organizations that exceeded their fundraising goals are the Shepherd’s Office and the Barbara K. Brooks Transition House.

The Shepherd’s Office in Georgetown is a resource group that aids folks working through challenges caused by homelessness, rejection, addiction, criminal history and socioeconomic status. The group aims to address those challenges holistically, including social, emotional, physical, mental and spiritual approaches to healing.

The organization provides free hot homemade meals every weekday, including a free lunch on Mondays and Thursdays and a free dinner on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

This year, the Shepherd’s Office raised \$68,550 from

419 donors, exceeding its goal of \$65,000. It also led the leaderboard as the nonprofit with the most individual donations.

“We’re super grateful and humbled that they thought that much of us that they would make a donation online,” said Jim Martin, the group’s founder. “We’re just very grateful to them, and we’re not going to let them down.”

The group also won a number of competitions during the 24-hour period that boosted their total donations by almost \$4,000.

“Because of their donations we will become the answer to many prayers,” he said. “We would like to thank everyone who donated through Do More 24 and throughout the year to help us help the hurting.”

Moving forward, Martin said the Shepherd’s Office plans to “do more of the same, but more of it.”

His group currently prepares about 150 free brown bag meals for people in need every single day. It’s not cheap, Martin said, and the donations received will help the group continue fulfilling their mission, even in economically tumultuous times.

The support he has seen for the organization is so vast that Martin is even considering opening a second location in Lewes.

“One of my goals is to expand to another location,” he said. “Maybe I would be able to pay rent somewhere else like I do in Georgetown. Lewes has a great need for that kind of service and I think we could help address that need.”

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FOOD & DINING

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BY PAM GEORGE

It's not every day that Milford-area diners get to dine with a count. But on Friday, March 18, Conti Manfredi di San Bonifacio will be showcasing his wines at Benvenuto, a Milford restaurant.

The count and the restaurant are a perfect pairing, said Diego Lascano, the restaurant's wine and beverage director. "We are a Tuscan-inspired restaurant, and his winery is in Tuscany," explained Lascano, who previously worked for the wine distributor that sells the count's products in this area. "His wine and our food make perfect sense."

WINE, DINE WITH ITALIAN COUNT AT MILFORD'S BENVENUTO

Benvenuto, which means welcome, was inspired by a family friendship that started in 1955 when owner's parents lived in Italy for 11 months. Subsequent generations have continued to visit each other and stay in touch.

Count Manfredi has a similar story. He met Matt Haley, founder of Rehoboth Beach-based SoDel Concepts, when Haley was lost in the Italian countryside.

Haley knocked on the count's door to ask for directions. The two became fast friends, and Haley spearheaded the effort to bring Conti di San Bonifacio wines to the United States.

Despite Haley's death in 2014, Manfredi has continued to visit the Delaware coast, but this is the first time he's attended a wine dinner in Milford.

Manfredi is thrilled to return to the state. "It's been nearly three years since I've been able to travel outside of Italy and Europe, and I can't tell you all what it means to be back in Delaware," he said. "For so many reasons, I see you all as family, and the friendships I've made in this last decade couldn't mean more to me and my wife and boys."

At the heart of the trip is his opportunity to share "something of Italy and critically newly released vintages of wines from Tuscany and Treviso," he said. "Being here in person to meet you, taste the wines together and spend a few days telling the stories of our terroir is a personal pleasure for me."

Lascano made the trip extra special by inviting him to Benvenuto. "The fact that this amazing restaurant celebrates the food and wine culture of Tuscany makes this [visit] resonate all the more," Manfredi said.

Executive chef Jesus Zeus Gordiany will prepare five courses to complement Conti di San Bonifacio wines.

Since the menu is influenced by seasonal ingredients and availability—a concern given supply chain issues—Gordiany won't release details until the event.

"Our guests know the food is going to be fantastic, and the wines are excellent," Lascano said.

If you go: Five-course dinner featuring Conti di San Bonifacio wines with Manfredi di San Bonifacio; 6 p.m., March 18; \$100; Benvenuto at 249 NE Front St., Milford. Call 302-265-2652 for reservations.





BY PAM GEORGE

It can be easier to guess Wordle on the first try than to score a table at the new **Snuff Mill Restaurant, Butchery & Wine Bar** in Brandywine Hundred. The intimate eatery opens reservations to the public a month in advance and books up fast. But on Thursday, March 31, you can sample ingredients that make this newbie such a hotspot.

Think skillet-seared ribeye steak with roasted garlic, string beans with shallots and Café de Paris butter and ricotta gnocchi with spring asparagus, shrimp, Meyer lemon zest, leeks and basil.

The catch? You will make it yourself.

But that won't be a problem considering chefs Robert Lhulier and Maddie Sutton will be in your homes to walk you through it.

The chefs are participating in the second **Cooking for**

FOOD BANK'S COOKING FOR A CAUSE SHOWCASES SNUFF MILL

a Cause to benefit the Food Bank of Delaware. The virtual cook-a-long provides participants with everything they need to make dinner, dessert and a beverage in the comfort of their own home. At 6 p.m., the students log on to a broadcast to start stirring, dicing and searing.

The premier event in April 2021 raised \$20,000 for the Food Bank of Delaware's Culinary School Scholarship Program. Now that organizers have already experienced technology-related hiccups, they've made changes to improve the experience.

No gown. No tux. Great food.

The first event occurred during the height of the pandemic, when galas, golf tournaments and other fundraisers skidded to a halt.

After watching chef friends teach Facebook classes during quarantine, Jeff Whitmarsh, a Food Bank board member, came up with the idea. An in-home fundraiser presented multiple advantages, he realized.

"The virtual format allowed us to reach anyone who wanted to participate, regardless of their vaccination status or health condition," Whitmarsh said. "Also, it was fun and new, which sparked an interest."

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GOVERNMENT



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SUSSEX P&Z APPROVES NATURAL GAS FACILITY NEXT TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

imity to Phillis Wheatley Elementary School, which has about 600 students.

“The decision to unanimously approve a dangerous gas pipeline expansion next door to a school and residential community is unconscionable,” said Food & Water Watch Delaware Organizer Greg Layton.

“Not only will this project put Sussex County residents at risk, but it will also deepen our reliance on the dirty fossil fuels locking us into climate disaster.”

Ultimately, the commission decided the risk was not sufficient to deny the request.

The proposed offloading station will be located at 17035 Black Cherry Drive in Bridgeville. The final site plan will be subject to review and approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

“Luckily, this project isn’t a done deal,” Layton said. “We look forward to a public debate on this pipeline proposal before the Sussex County Council, where our elected representatives will have the clear choice to side with their constituents over dirty energy interests.”

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BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Sussex County’s Planning and Zoning Commission on March 10 approved a Bridgeville project that will result in a natural gas offloading station being built 1,300 feet away from an elementary school. The project will result in at least 18 gas trucks visiting the site each day.

The commission deferred action on Eastern Shore Natural Gas’ conditional use request during a Feb. 10 meeting after numerous members of the public objected to the proposal.

But on March 10, they seemed to want to make up for the lost time. Commissioner Kim Hoey Stevenson quickly detailed the request, moved to approve it, and the commission passed it unanimously.

That comes as a major concern to opponents who say the project invites the risk of explosions in close prox-

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PROPOSED LAW WOULD HAVE CAR INSURERS TURN A BLIND EYE TO GENDER

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A bill filed in the General Assembly would make it illegal for car insurers in Delaware to use gender as a factor when determining customers' premiums.

Senate Bill 231, sponsored by Sen. Kyle Evans Gay, D-Brandywine Hundred, prohibits the use of gender, gender identity, or sex as a rating factor in personal automobile insurance policies.

Gay cited a report from the Delaware Department of Insurance and Consumer Federation of America which suggests that Delaware women are charged more than men for car insurance even when all other factors, including their driving records, are the same.

According to the report, GEICO and Progressive are the worst offenders, charging women on average 21% and 20% more than men, respectively. Some insurers in Delaware were not found to charge women more and one insurer was found to charge men more, on average.

Christina Haas, senior policy adviser for the Delaware Department of Insurance, said that no matter the numbers, pricing auto insurance rates based on gender isn't okay.

"In addition to our moral obligation to ensure fairness, we also pursue this because premiums should be based on a person's risk," Haas said during a Transportation Committee hearing March 8. "Gender is not adequately predictive of risk and is likely to become less predictive over time."

She said including gender as a rating factor perpetuates negative stereotypes. It becomes even more problematic when considering the effects it has on transgender drivers, she said.

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PAID LEAVE PASSES IN SENATE, HEADS TO HOUSE

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Paid family and medical leave in Delaware moved one step closer to becoming a reality March 8 after the Senate passed a bill to create the program along party lines.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Sarah McBride, D-Wilmington North, will now advance to the House of Representatives.

The **Healthy Delaware Families Act** would create a statewide insurance program to provide up to 80% of wages for eligible Delaware workers for up to 12 weeks per year for parental leave and six weeks over two years for caregiving and medical leave.

The program would be funded through a 0.8% payroll contribution split between the employer and the employee. For example, an employee who makes \$1,000 per week would pay \$4 per week and so would their employer.

“Today, because of our work, there will be millions of Delawareans for generations to come, who when they

face the most human of experiences, will have this basic but necessary support system to rely on,” McBride said.

“There will be parents who will be able to spend that life-affirming time with a new child,” she continued. “There will be family members who will be able to be there by a loved one’s side through the terror of a serious diagnosis. There will be patients who will be able to get life-saving treatment because of our ‘yes’ votes today.”

Senate Republicans, all of whom voted against the measure, said the law would have an adverse impact on small businesses.

Many pointed to record inflation and rising gas prices to suggest that now is not the time to impose additional financial burdens on struggling employers.

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Summer Fun Club

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Delaware is the best place for action-packed camp activities this summer!

Summer Fun Club is a great way for kids to form lasting friendships, learn new things, and have lots of fun!





BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

When Maryann Pielmeier went to vote in favor of a referendum to build a new police station in Milford, she was turned away at the polling place and told that she wasn't registered to vote. Pielmeier was confused. She was registered to vote in the state of Delaware, but poll workers told her that Milford had its own voter database, and she wasn't on it.

A [bill](#) filed in the General Assembly addresses exactly that problem by requiring Delaware's cities and towns to use the state's voter registration system rather than their own.

Pielmeier had lived in Milford for nearly four years, and Jan. 26, 2021—the day of the referendum—was the first time anybody ever told her that she had to register with both the town and the state.

She then filled out all of the paperwork to register, but

was told that it wouldn't be processed in time for her to vote in that election.

Pielmeier isn't alone. Only 12 out of Delaware's 57 municipalities currently use the state Department of Elections database to determine voter eligibility.

The rest run their own registration systems, meaning voters like Pielmeier are undoubtedly turned away in at least some of the 45 municipalities that require voters to register separately.

That's a big problem during election season, said the bill's sponsor, Sen. S. Elizabeth 'Tizzy' Lockman, a Democrat from Wilmington.

"In some of our municipalities there is this divide between registration for elections on the state level and elections on a municipal level," Lockman said in an interview with Delaware LIVE News. "That has had the

impact of disenfranchising voters who are not aware of what is a surprising and somewhat illogical system."

The result, she explained, is that voters who are less informed—not necessarily by any fault of their own—can find themselves in the position of not being able to participate in their local elections.

"It's about voter access," Lockman said. "I think that's something that's a strong value for many of us, and it certainly is for me."

But some legislators say the bill goes too far and infringes on municipalities' autonomy over their elections.

"There are many towns that are opposed to switching to the state's system," said Senate Minority Whip Sen. Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown. "I've always been of the opinion that if a town wants to expand it to state voter rolls, let them do it, but to turn around and have the state force that upon the municipalities, I think, takes away from that local control."

Pettyjohn, a former town councilman and mayor of Georgetown, said that during his two municipal elections he never heard any complaints from residents that wanted to vote but couldn't. "I'm not sure what the scope of the problem is," he said.

Georgetown has since switched to using the state's voter registration system.

Lockman said that in some municipalities, specifically rural communities in Sussex County and majority-minority communities in New Castle County, the current system—whether intentionally or not—can have the effect of voter disenfranchisement and even suppression.

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BILL ON CHARTER ADMISSION DRAWS LIVELY OPINIONS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Two Black Wilmington leaders stand on opposite sides of the debate over whether Delaware Charter Schools should be able to give admission preference to students who live nearby.

Logan Herring, CEO of **The WRK Group**, an organization that focuses on community potential and eliminating the barriers of structural racism in Riverside, supports the 5-mile radius preference.

Herring said he does not want children bussed into the community just to take advantage of the community's charter school, then leave once they reap the benefits, while the people paying taxes for the school will not all have that opportunity.

The Riverside neighborhood of Wilmington includes the well-respected EastSide Charter School.

“We want schools in Riverside to attract their own neighborhood,” Herring said during the March 9 hearing. “We don’t want to see people coming in from the outside and taking advantage of all the good that’s going on in the neighborhood or displacing students that the school is designed for.”

Herring said after the meeting that one reason he wants Riverside children to benefit from the charter schools is that they are the ones who historically have been left out of socioeconomic opportunities, including access to quality education.

Rep. Nnamdi Chukwuocha, D-Wilmington, said during the hearing that charters who include living nearby as one of their admissions tests are operating with racist implications.

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URSULINE SISTERS' BILINGUAL CHILDREN'S BOOK HONORS TEACHER

BY JAREK RUTZ

Ursuline Academy students wrapped in red sweaters were transported March 9 to a tropical rainforest with colorful flowers and animated wildlife in Peru, thanks to twin sisters Ava and Bella Lindia.

The sisters took the kindergarten to fifth graders on the voyage by reading their newly published bilingual children's book, "El Amigo Eterno."

The Ursuline seniors wrote and illustrated the book partly to honor their elementary school art teacher, Bernadette DeLong, who died in 2020.

The book's main character, a bright green Lorito Verde, common to the southern Amazon, shares the name of their art teacher, Bernadette, who once taught in Peru.

The book was published in January by Creo En Ti Media after the sisters won a national contest to which students submitted bilingual books. Ava illustrated the book while her sister Bella authored. It sells on [Amazon](#) for \$10.

"Our inspiration for the book came from a story that our art teacher used to share," Bella told the dozens of children in the audience at Ursuline. "She used to always tell us that she once rescued an injured bird and healed it...in the comfort of a sock."

DeLong used to share a slew of stories that taught her classes about art and life, Ava said.

While the book only took a few months to create, the publishing process took about a year.

The twins aren't from a Hispanic background and don't speak Spanish fluently, but they have taken Spanish and World Language during their time at Ursuline.

With the help of Ursuline's Spanish teacher, Erin Prada, the girls were able to depict the Peruvian Amazon, the setting of the book, in an accurate and comprehensive way for children to enjoy and understand.

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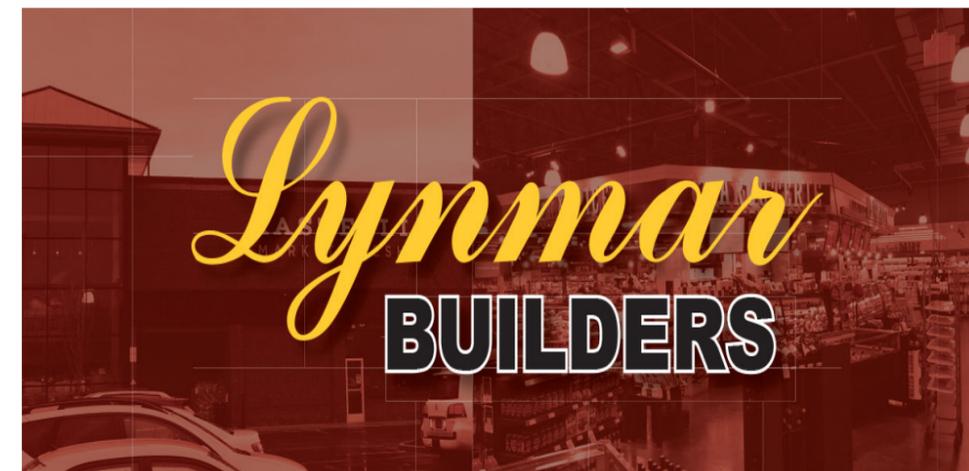


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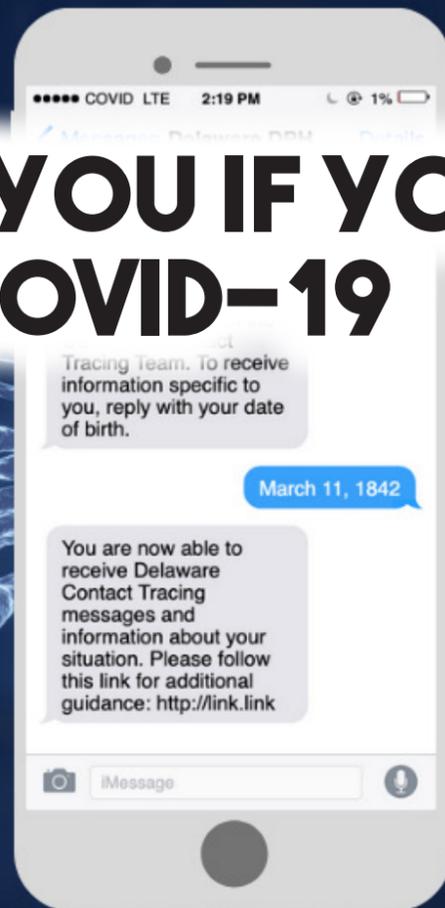


HEALTH

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DPH WILL TEXT YOU IF YOU TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Delaware Division of Public Health now plans to text you if you have COVID-19.

The DPH Contact Tracing Team has launched a pre-call text messaging initiative to individuals who test positive for COVID-19. It involves sending a text message to COVID-positive individuals and providing initial isolation guidance and recommendations through a secure web platform before they receive a call from the Contact Tracing Team.

It serves as an early notification system, getting people to isolate themselves more quickly instead of

having to wait for a call from a member of the Contact Tracing Team for instructions. A pilot program that tested the service on a small number of individuals launched on March 1, 2022.

DPH uses a unique identification number that will appear as the sender of the text on the receiver's mobile device or cellular phone. Texts coming from the number 37821 are legitimate SMS messages from DPH.

The initial message lets the individual know that DPH has critical information for them and asks them to reply with their date of birth. If the information matches

DPH's records, the person will receive a return message that they can now access messages from the Contact Tracing Team. If the date of birth does not match DPH's records, the person will be asked to call the Contact Tracing Team with a reference number provided in the return text.

The initial message also provides a link to the Contact Tracing page on the coronavirus website to help individuals verify that the initiative is legitimate. DPH will not ask you for additional personal information through text message.

Once the person's identity is confirmed, they will be able to access isolation guidance on an internal DPH webpage via a separate link.

"We wanted to improve speed and efficiency with contacting positive cases," said director of the DPH Contact Tracing Team Tracey Johnson. "Our team has worked on the project for months to develop a delivery service that is both easy to use and secure. Mail or email may be too slow in alerting a person of their status concerning the virus. With the national increase in spam calls and a tendency for people to ignore unfamiliar phone numbers, we felt it was important to develop a safe, least intrusive way to get in touch with them. Early notification and guidance for COVID-positive persons can lead to earlier isolation, and a reduced chance of spreading the virus."

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BILL TO GIVE UNDOCUMENTED KIDS FREE HEALTH INSURANCE MOVES FORWARD

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Delaware could soon guarantee health insurance for undocumented children if a bill released from committee March 9 passes in the General Assembly.

House Bill 317, sponsored by Rep. Krista Griffith, D-Fairfax, would require the Department of Health and Social Services to develop and operate a medical coverage program for children who are not eligible for either Medicaid or **CHIP** because of their immigration status.

According to the bill's fiscal note, it would cost Delaware taxpayers just over \$2 million in 2023, \$6.95 million in 2024 and \$7.31 million in 2025.

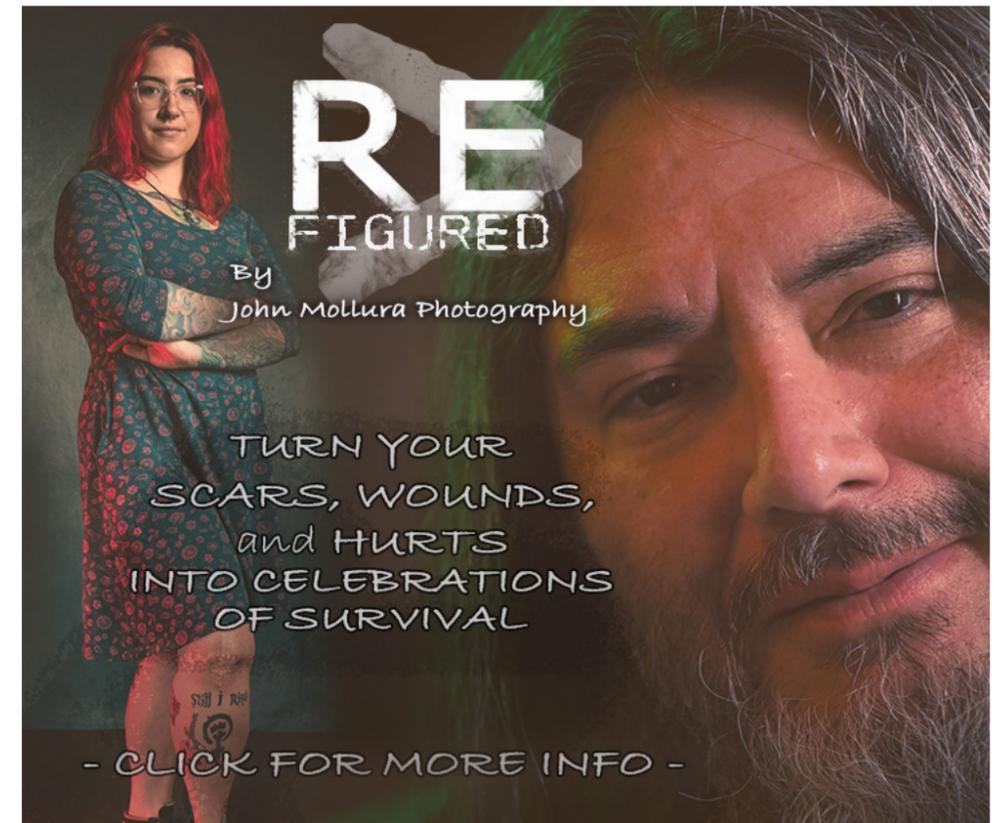
The fiscal note assumes that by 2025, 2,000 children will be enrolled in the program at a rate of \$3,780 per child per year. That would require more than half of the state's 5,000 undocumented immigrant children not to participate in the program. The proposal has been dubbed the "Cover All Delaware Children Act."

The bill was unanimously voted out of the House Health & Human Development Committee and will proceed the House Appropriations Committee, where it is expected to receive a full, public hearing as the governor did not include funds for the program in his proposed budget.

"Essentially what this does is it will provide health insurance coverage by the state to children who are undocumented, whose families cannot afford to purchase health care," Griffith said. "Many of us take health insurance and its life-saving benefits for granted, but for hundreds of Delaware children, there is no viable option for them to get covered."

According to Griffith, there are approximately 5,000 undocumented children in Delaware. Many undocumented children have parents who earn low wages and are not offered employer-based health insurance.

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PHOTO BY NICK HALLIDAY





JOHNSTON SHINES AS CARAVEL GIRLS WIN STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

BY JASON WINCHELL

The sixth time was definitely the charm.

Caravel, a perennial power in Delaware in girls basketball, had gone 0-5 in the DIAA championship game since 2013. But one of the players who was on the last team to make it to the title game made sure 2022 would be different. Senior India Johnston, playing her last high school game, scored 27 points to help the Buccaneers at last take home the trophy after a 53-47 overtime thriller over Sanford at the Bob Carpenter Center on March 11.

“I was at a loss for words. The first thing I did was just cry with excitement,” Johnston said. “It’s just really unreal right now.”

The top-seeded Buccaneers fell behind early in overtime, but Johnston—with a huge assist to sophomore guard Jasiyah Crawford—got them back in front and guided them to victory.

Sanford, the No. 2 seed, was in comeback mode most of the night, but the Warriors got off to a good start in the extra period as Zoe Kashner hit a short jumper 48 seconds in. Kashner had a solid night after being pressed into a starting role because of an injury to Amiya Carroll.

Crawford, a sophomore guard, was a big scoring presence early in the game, but she had been held off the scoreboard after the first quarter until coming up big after Kashner’s basket. She set up outside the NBA three-point line at the Carpenter Center, took a pass from Giniah Gale and put up a high-arching shot that seemed to hang in the air forever. It came down with a swish, thrilling the large Caravel student section behind the basket and giving the Bucs the lead for good.

“I had no doubt that I could shoot. I trust myself. I trust my team. The coach trusts me to take that shot. I knew it was going to go in,” Crawford said.”

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The Buccaneers got the ball back after a Warriors turnover, and Johnston hit a pull-up jumper with 1:57 to go to extend their lead to three. She was fouled the next time Caravel had possession, and she made two free throws. Johnston then hustled back for a defensive rebound, got fouled again and made two free throws again as the lead reached seven with 50 seconds to go.

But the job was not done, and Bucs coach Kristin Caldwell looked on nervously from the sideline. Pierce hit a pair of free throws, but time was running short. After one last free throw from Johnston, the clock finally hit zeroes, and Caldwell, who has been associated with Caravel as a student, athlete, teacher and coach for decades, could finally relax.

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TOWER HILL EARNS FIRST-EVER STATE FINAL APPEARANCE

BY JOE SINGLES

The No. 3 seed Tower Hill Hillers took on the No. 10 seed Seaford Blue Jays Thursday evening at University of Delaware in the semifinals of the DIAA boys' basketball state tournament. This was Tower Hill's second trip to the semis in two years while this would be Seaford's first trip to the semis in 25 years.

The first few minutes of the game gave a clear indication of how each squad would look to play. Seaford pushed the ball up the court on every opportunity looking to attack the rim and catch the Hillers on their heels defensively.

However, the solid man-to-man defense that Tower Hill has demonstrated throughout the year made it difficult for Seaford to get any good looks at the basket as it settled for off-balanced, acrobatic shots that they were unable to convert.

Tower Hill scored 10 unanswered points midway through the first quarter and took an 18-8 lead going into the second. Seaford came out a bit more under control in the second and found higher percentage shots in the half court.

The Blue Jays moved the ball offensively and made the Hillers work much harder defensively than they did in the first.

Unfortunately for Seaford, it was unable to slow down the Hillers at the other end of the court. Tower Hill

found open shooters and made the extra pass, converting on shots close to the basket, in and around the lane.

Seaford had its best quarter shooting percentage wise as it was 50% from the three-point line and 40% from the field, but would still go into halftime down 32-18.

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BY JOE SINGLES

Sallies and Howard, two schools that are familiar with postseason basketball, matched up in the second semi-final of the evening at University of Delaware Thursday for the right to play Tower Hill for the state championship Saturday.

Howard looked to speed up the game earlier, full court pressing the Sallies squad that struggled at times to find consistent guard play.

Despite the pressure, it was Sallies who would find themselves with an early 13-0 lead with 1:33 to go in the first quarter. Howard would get on the board with a minute to go, but the Wildcats would need to slow things down offensively to get back into the game. The Sallies led 17-4 after one quarter.

Momentum shifted temporarily early in the second as the Wildcats came out with renewed sense of purpose,

SALLIES ADVANCES TO STATE FINAL WITH WIN OVER HOWARD

but were only able to come with five points halfway through the quarter. Sallies swingman Justin Molen gave Sallies the calming presence they needed to withstand the Howard pressure and helped Salesianum maintain a double-digit lead through what was a poorly played quarter from both squads.

Sallies would take a 29-13 lead into halftime giving the game a much different feel than the last time they met a few weeks ago in a well-played Howard win.

Howard pressured the Sallies' ball handlers and forced a number of turnovers early in the third quarter, but were rarely able to convert the possessions into points.

The two teams went back and forth throughout the quarter trading layups at both ends with neither team developing any sort of consistency in the half court.

Sallies held an 18-point lead with 46.5 second to go in the quarter with tensions rising as fouls, turnovers and technical fouls set the tone in what must have been one of the longest eight minute quarters in high school basketball history which saw Salesianum lead 43-28 after three.

At the 4:40 mark of the fourth quarter, the Wildcats brought the game to within single digits since the Sallies led 9-0 at the beginning of the game. Howard finally looked patient offensively which led to better shots and better offensive rebounding position directly under the basket.

However, Sallies would also improve their quality of play on the offensive end quickly making it a 15-point game in the next two minutes.

With two minutes to go and Justin Molen for Sallies out with a rolled ankle, the Wildcats called a timeout

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