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**Science of Reading to Improve Literacy Rates**



**High-Speed Internet in Every Home**



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PHOTO BY SCOTT EVERS



# HEADLINES

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# DELAWARE SCHOOLS TO TURN TO SCIENCE OF READING TO IMPROVE LITERACY RATES

BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware's once highly-ranked reading scores are worse than those in Mississippi. Much worse.

In 2002, Delaware fourth graders outperformed Mississippi's by 21 points on national scores, with the First State well above the national average. Today, after a decade of emphasizing training teachers in the science, Mississippi students handily outperform Delaware's, which has dropped below the national average.

Less than half of Delaware's students can read at their grade level, including about one-quarter of White students and half of Black and Brown students, attendees at the Delaware Reading Summit heard Thursday. That struggle follows them into their adult years, speakers said. Eight University of Delaware football stadiums could be packed with the 160,000 Delaware adults who can't read.

Legislators and education nonprofits want to change that by integrating the **science of reading** into public schools. The science of reading is defined as cognitive brain research that shows how students learn to read, said Monica Gant, chief academic officer for the Delaware Department of Education.

Senate Bill 133, signed into law in June 2021, was the first of several pieces of planned legislation that focused on the science of reading, Gant said. Sponsored by Sen. Laura V. Sturgeon., D-Hockessin, SB 133 created a literacy plan that would train teachers to be able to engage students in the essential components of evidenced-based reading

instruction. Many current teachers were trained under out-of-date materials, or programs that since have been proven not to work and may even be counterproductive, said several speakers at the summit.

SB 133 requires elementary school, early childhood education or special education teachers or reading specialists to provide instruction aligned with the science of reading by July 1, 2023.

Among other things, the science of reading says that nearly all children learn to read in the same way no matter their ethnicity or background; that one in five kids is dyslexic; and that fundamentals such as focusing on phonics, are key to success and later performance.

SB133 specifies the number of hours of professional development that teachers must complete to be considered proficient in teaching using the science of reading. Since SB 133 became law, more than 700 teachers and educators have taken part in that training, Gant said.

"We know reading is a complex process, more than just saying words out loud," said Mark Holodick, Delaware secretary of education, who supports both the shift in reading instruction and making it universal. "We need evidence-based research on how to promote language development."

Sturgeon announced during Thursday's Delaware Reading Summit that she will introduce an additional three pieces of legislation to address Delaware's literacy rate.

A former teacher and chairman of the Senate Education Committee, Sturgeon says she plans to introduce one resolution and two bills.

The resolution would strengthen the certification requirements of teachers applying to Delaware schools. Educators would be required to be well versed in the science of reading and able to construct lessons that closely align.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

# SIX MONTHS FROM ELECTION, MOST CANDIDATES HAVE YET TO FILE

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

With just six months to go before the first votes are cast in the 2022 General Assembly elections, most incumbent state representatives and senators have yet to file for re-election. The current legislative session comes to an end in November, meaning all 21 Senate seats and 41 House seats will be up for grabs. Candidates must file by July 12 to appear on the ballot.

Three of the state's executive offices—attorney general, treasurer and auditor of accounts—will also be on the ballot. No candidates have filed for election to those seats.

The primary election will be held on Sept. 13, 2022 and the general election will be held on Nov. 8, 2022.

Two senators, Sen. Ernie Lopez, R-Rehoboth Beach, and Sen. Bruce Ennis, D-Smyrna, have announced they will not seek re-election. Two representatives, Rep. David Bentz, D-Christiana, and Rep. John Kowalko, D-Newark, have also said they will retire at the end of their current terms.

The district previously represented by Gerald Brady, who resigned in February, no longer exists. During redistricting, a new district was created in the Long Neck and Oak Orchard area of Sussex County, to reflect population growth in that area.

Rep. Bud Freel, D-Wilmington, recently won a special election to represent Brady's district until November. He has said he does not plan to challenge Rep. Krista



Griffith, whose 12th Representative District will swallow much of the territory previously occupied by the 4th.

Jane Brady, chair of the Republican Party of Delaware, said she has several reasons to expect more candidates than usual to run for office this year.

“First, there is a greater awareness of the importance of local races, including school boards,” she said. “Second, there is a general and fairly significant dissatisfaction with the way things are—in the schools, in the economy and in foreign policy.”

The primary issues Brady expects Republican candidates to focus their campaigns on are education, the economy, public safety and government transparency.

Multiple attempts to reach the Delaware Democratic Party were unsuccessful.

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# 42 TO COMPETE FOR 19 SCHOOL BOARD SEATS IN MAY ELECTION

BY JAREK RUTZ

When Delaware residents go to the polls in May, they'll find 19 school board seats up for grabs and 42 candidates who want them. The deadline to file to run in the 16 districts having elections was March 4.

Of the 19 open seats, only three races are going uncontested, one each in Christina, Brandywine and Cape Henlopen school districts. New Castle County VoTech, Polytech and Sussex Tech also have open seats, but Gov. John Carney will appoint people to fill them.

This year's election will feature more contests than usual: 84% of the seats will be challenged, up 21% from last year. The seat with the most interest is in Red Clay, where four candidates are battling for District C's chair, including incumbent Ashley Sabo.

The 2022 election will be the first in which the winners will have four-year terms, rather than five-year ones. And it's also coming on the heels of the COVID-19

pandemic, which caused public bodies to livestream meetings, exposing more people to how they are run. In addition, hot-button national issues, such as children wearing masks in schools and the teaching of critical race theory, have spread. That's led to more awareness and involvement.

Not everybody was a fan of the change in term limits. Britney Mumford, executive director of [DelawareCAN](#), a non-profit focusing on education reform, said groups like hers were supportive of the term limit change.

"I think it will encourage more folks to run," she said. "Four years is less of a commitment, and is generally the amount of years someone's kid is in high school, so it can coincide with folks' interests."

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# HOUSE REPUBLICANS PUSH \$100 REBATE; DEMS MAY HAVE OWN PLAN

BY BETSY PRICE

State House Republicans plan to circulate a bill to require Delaware to issue a one-time \$100 million tax rebate that would give each resident \$100. Under the plan, a family of four would get \$400 from the state's expected surplus revenue of nearly \$1 billion.

The rebate would help residents deal with the rise in the cost of gasoline and other costs caused by inflation, the Republicans said. Only legal residents would be eligible, the Republican press release said.

"This proposal is consistent with what our members have been proposing since early last year," said House Minority Leader Danny Short (R-Seaford). "Our state experienced huge revenue surpluses last year, without enacting any significant tax reduction measures. We have again been gifted with large surpluses in the current fiscal year. There is simply no excuse for not moving forward with targeted tax cuts and rebates, returning some of this excess cash to our citizens."

Short and House Minority Whip Tim Duke (R-Laurel) said the 2020 Census recorded 989,948 people living in the state. Current state population estimates slightly exceed one million.

Giving a \$100-per-person rebate "amounts to less than one-eighth of the current surplus, providing state lawmakers with plenty of remaining flexibility to consider other proposals," Duke said.

House Democratic leadership said in response that providing direct economic relief to residents is an effort they have been exploring and researching.

"We are hopeful that we will be able to announce a fully funded, economically responsible proposal in the near future," said a comment released by Drew Volturo, the caucus's deputy chief of staff for communications.

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# CULTURE

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# 302 BEER DRINKERS' CHOICE AWARDS TO CROWN 'DELAWARE'S BEST BEER' ON APRIL 3

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The 302 Beer Drinkers' Choice Awards will return to Crooked Hammock's flagship brewpub in Lewes on Sunday, April 3. Every brewery in the state is invited to compete in the event, which organizers said is "known for its sudsy silliness and refined debauchery."

"Delaware's brewery scene has exploded by leaps and bounds in recent years and we wanted to create a one-of-a-kind festival that promotes our shared commitment to the 302," said Crooked Hammock owner Rich Garrahan.

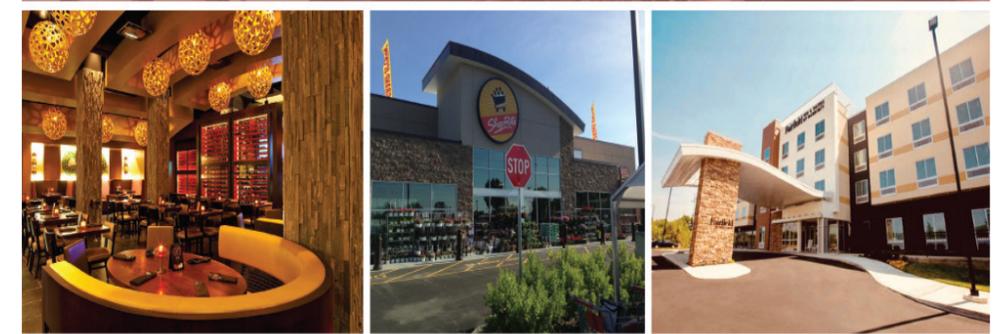
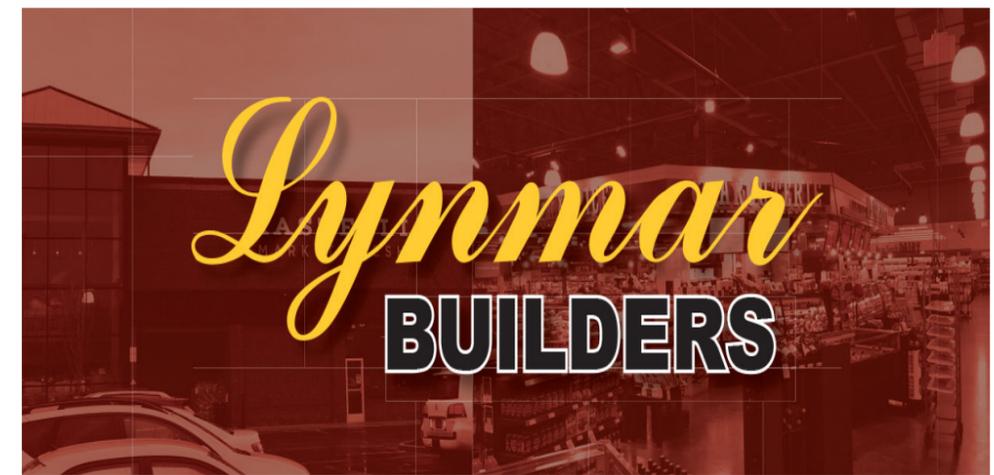
"Every single brewery in the state is welcome back and we challenge those who haven't reached out to get off

the sidelines," he said. "Don't be scared. It's more about connecting with each other than winning or losing."

But it does have a great deal to do with winning, too. Both brewers and attendees will vie for a number of awards, including "Fan Favorite Beer, Most Unique Beer, Best Brewery Costume, Best Drinkers Costume and Best Edible Necklace"—whatever that means.

Guests will have the chance to vote online and democratically pick winners; of the people, by the people, for the people in the never-ending quest to crown Delaware's "Best Beer."

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BY BETSY PRICE

If you're dazzled by the decor in HBO's "The Gilded Age," you can get a taste of what was included in the Delaware Art Museum's new Tiffany glass exhibit. The lean, spare show lets the 60 pieces on display spread out and speak for themselves. It also lets viewers get close enough to see the mastery of the work, which includes layered glass, embedded rocks and chunks of glass, and overlapping soldered pieces that create a depth you may never have noticed.

"Louis Comfort Tiffany: Treasures from the Driehaus Collection" opened March 11 and runs through June 5. It was meant to open in 2020, but was postponed when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, said Dr. Heather Campbell Coyle, chief curator and curator of American art. It was drawn from the massive collection of the late Richard H. Driehaus of Chicago.

The theme of the exhibit is Tiffany's love of nature, which runs through the pieces, and their innovative approaches. Those on display include huge stained glass pieces, vases made to look like flowers and household items such as inkwells.

Louis Comfort Tiffany was the son of Charles Lewis Tiffany, who founded the famous jewelry and silver store. Louis Comfort studied art at the National Academy

## DELAWARE ART MUSEUM'S TIFFANY EXHIBIT OFFERS PEEK AT 'GILDED AGE'

of Design and went into interior design. He would go on to create rooms for many families in the Gilded Age, which was largely the 1880s as industrialization and new wealth descended on New York. The clash of the old and new money families forms the backdrop for HBO's "The Gilded Age," which many people think of as America's "Downton Abbey" because it was created by the same person, Julian Fellowes. Coyle said she's enjoying watching it.

Tiffany's interest in interior design led to him becoming interested in stained glass. At that time, stained glass usually was created by having color put on the outside of clear glass. Tiffany became famous for embedding color into the glass before it was blown or cut into shapes. Even then, though, artists were still required to paint the faces of people onto glass, Coyle said.

She said she didn't realize until she was helping unpack the exhibit pieces how beautiful the metalwork of the lamp bases themselves were, because they are so often overshadowed by the showy lamp shades.

There was such a demand for Tiffany work that his glasshouse in Queens grew to include teams of people, including women, who would create pieces. They spanned the time of gas lighting and electric lighting, and many of the lampshades and bases reflect when they were created.

His work would end up in churches and other religious places as well as public spaces. Some of Tiffany's work would be custom-ordered for a one-of-a-kind piece. But Tiffany also had plenty of pieces that people could browse and buy off the shelf, Coyle said. One of those made its way to Delaware.

Wilmington industrialist Samuel Bancroft and his wife, Mary, wanted a window for their home, where they were creating an interior to show off their growing art collection, which focused on the Pre-Raphaelites.

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# TRACE ADKINS, FRANK REYES TOP OFF 2022 STATE FAIR CONCERT LINEUP

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Delaware State Fair has announced its final two headline acts for the 2022 Delaware Lottery Summer Concert Series at the M&T Bank Grandstand.

Country music star Trace Adkins and Dominican bachata artist Frank Reyes will top off the star-studded list of acts that already includes Hank Williams Jr., Sam Hunt, Nelly, Toby Mac, ZZ Top, and, of course, the annual demolition derby.

The 103rd Delaware State Fair will be held from July 21 to 30, 2022. The theme is “Summer Nights & Carnival Lights.”

The jam-packed lineup is refreshing news for devoted fairgoers. In 2020, all concerts were canceled because of

the pandemic. Acts would have included country musicians Dierks Bentley, Hank Williams Jr. and comedian Jim Gaffigan.

In 2021, the concert lineup originally featured TobyMac, Sam Hunt, Hank Williams Jr. and Vanilla Ice, but they all pulled out because of uncertainty surrounding Delaware’s COVID-19 large gathering restrictions.

Delawareans can expect to see the following performances during the 2022 State Fair:

- Sam Hunt on Thursday, July 21 @ 7:30 p.m.
- Halestorm on Friday, July 22 @ 7:30 p.m.
- Nelly on Saturday, July 23 @ 7:30 p.m.
- Demolition Derby on Sunday, July 24 @ 6 p.m.

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- Trace Adkins on Monday, July 25 @ 7:30 p.m.
- TobyMac on Tuesday, July 26 @ 7:30 p.m.
- ZZ Top on Wednesday, July 27 @ 7:30 p.m.
- Harness Racing on Thursday, July 28 @ 7:00 p.m.
- Frank Reyes on Friday, July 29 @ 7:30 p.m.
- Hank Williams Jr. on Saturday, July 30 @ 7:30 p.m.

Tickets range from \$20 to \$99 and can be purchased [HERE](#).



# KALMAR NYCKEL'S UNDERGROUND RAILROAD CLASS FOCUSES ON TRAVEL OPTIONS



BY JAREK RUTZ

The [Kalmar Nyckel Foundation](#) will offer a new class focusing on the many ways slaves could travel along the Underground Railway, emphasizing Delaware's role in it, as well as the state's maritime history. In addition, the program will teach five different strategic routes and factors, and five modes of transportation that made Delaware central to the escape networks of slaves.

The class, "Five Ways to Freedom: Navigating Delaware's Underground Railroad Network," can be taught in schools and will be taught at Fort Christina Park.

"Our goal is to have students engage critically with real-life stories and problem-solving from this pivotal

chapter of American history," said Sam Heed, director of education and senior historian for the foundation.

The Kalmar Nyckel is Delaware's tall ship, and the foundation maintains it and a maritime center on the Wilmington Riverfront. The center also is devoted to the state's rich maritime history, from colonial days until now. The ship is a model of the one that brought Swedish immigrants to the New World in 1638. They landed at The Rock, where Fort Christina Park now exists.

The class will include looks at five leaders—Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Thomas Garrett, Capt. Alfred Fountain and William Still—and the abolitionist move-

ment, which wanted to make slavery illegal. The Kalmar Nyckel ties into the movement because a "maritime Underground Railroad" allowed people to use ships and boats to find freedom. The oceanic aspect of the Underground Railroad is often forgotten about, said a Kalmar Nyckel Foundation press release.

The program is constructed to satisfy Delaware's K-12 Social Studies Standards for eighth grade history. It's also designed for all students, adult groups, and anyone interested in learning more about the underground railroad.

Heed said that emphasizing the "agency" freedom-seekers had in their travels will prompt students to analyze historical events and draw their own conclusions for deeper learning and understanding about the time period.

Heed said that the new program was funded by a "generous grant" from the [Chichester duPont Foundation](#).

To schedule a "Five Ways to Freedom," program, educators may contact Kalmar Nyckel Foundation Assistant Director of Education Marygrace Kennedy at [edu@KalmarNyckel.org](mailto:edu@KalmarNyckel.org) or call 302-429-7447 on weekdays.



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# FOOD & DINING

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# HAMILTON'S BRINGS ELEGANT FARE TO NEWARK'S MAIN STREET

BY PAM GEORGE

For months, Newark residents and visitors impatiently waited for Hamilton's on Main to open its doors. The anticipation grew when the restaurant hosted a private party last December, but an unexpected HVAC issue forced the hungry public to practice patience. The wait is finally over. Hamilton's on Main is now in a soft opening phase, and a grand opening will be in April.

The Main Street restaurant is the creation of restaurateurs Anthony and Jeremiah Brooks, who moved to Delaware from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

The couple want to establish a robust food-and-wine program on Main Street. But putting a fine dining restaurant in the old Newark Bank building has not been easy.

## A lesson in perseverance

Jeremiah, the chef, and Anthony, the general manager, are no strangers to the business.

Jeremiah began his hospitality career in the front of the house some 20 years ago. But back then, there was no training program for managers. Instead, he had to learn customer relations and management skills on his own. He realized that the kitchen was an informal classroom where he could acquire new knowledge every day.

"I cut my teeth working for some of the best in the D.C. area—James Beard Award-winning chefs, Culinary Institute of America graduates," he said.

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PHOTO BY MARY ELIZABETH PHILLIPS

# GOVERNMENT

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# WILM. MAYOR'S BUDGET: TAX INCREASES, PAY RAISES, JOB CUTS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Included in Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki's proposed \$176.9 million city budget are a 7.5% property tax increase, a 5% increase in water and sewer fees, and the elimination

of 14 positions in city government.

Purzycki presented the fiscal year 2023 budget proposal before City Council Thursday along with an \$82.1 million water, sewer and stormwater budget. Fiscal year 2023 begins on July 1.

While the proposed budget is balanced by an infusion of \$12 million in federal relief funds, Purzycki said tax and fee increases are necessary to address lost revenues incurred during the pandemic and prevent future deficits.

"While city finances have generally stabilized, there is an unsettling threat of a continued loss of revenues from a number of sources," he said. "A sensible look down the road reveals an untenable deficit in years to come if we are not prudent today."

According to the mayor, because many employees are working from home, wage tax revenues are down \$1.5 million while tax refunds for those workers have in-

creased by \$2.4 million. Red light camera fines are down \$1.6 million and real estate tax appeals have resulted in an annual loss for the city of \$800,000. The city's interest revenue has fallen by \$1.5 million since 2019. In total, the city's projected revenues are \$7.8 million under pre-pandemic levels.

Those revenue streams have been falling throughout the pandemic, Purzycki explained, but in fiscal years 2021 and 2022, the city relied on CARES Act and rate stabilization funds to help offset losses.

They've done that because raising taxes and fees would have been "untenable," but moving forward the city "must be more disciplined about our finances," he said.

"I am proposing a 7.5% tax increase in this year's operating budget that will give us a small surplus in this year, but one that can be used in the near future to help balance future budgets," the mayor said. "Council must realize that in order not to leave our successors with catastrophic deficits, we have to raise additional sources of revenue."

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# HOUSE TO CONSIDER CHANGES TO REDISTRICTED MAPS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The House of Representatives will consider a bill Thursday to make changes to the district boundaries agreed upon during the redistricting process last year. Redistricting occurs after the national census every 10 years and redraws House and Senate districts to reflect population changes.

The General Assembly finalized new district maps in late October, just days before a self-imposed deadline of Nov. 8, 2021. Legislators said at the time that the maps needed to be finalized by that date to ensure candidates within any given district would be able to satisfy a one-year residency rule.

After a series of public hearings, an agreement was reached amongst both parties and [Senate Bill 199](#) was signed by the governor.

Despite some complaints that the process lacked transparency, legislative leaders assured the public and stakeholders that the process was handled as well as it could be, given substantial challenges including a months-long delay in getting accurate data from the Census Bureau.

On March 11, a bill was introduced and assigned to the House Administration Committee—which includes legislative leaders from both parties—to make minor adjustments to the agreed-upon maps.

Claire Snyder-Hall, executive director for [Common](#)

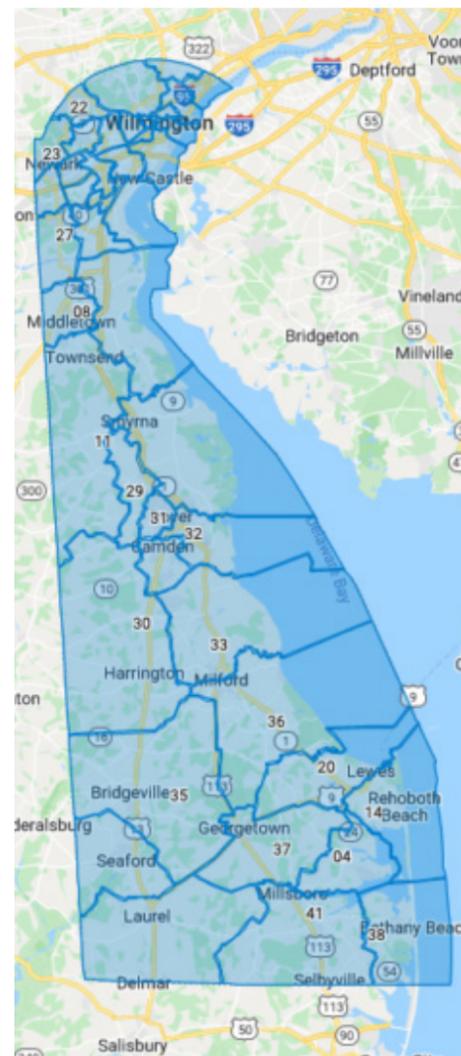
[Cause Delaware](#), said the bill raises serious questions about transparency in government.

“Last year, leadership said that the maps needed to be settled by Nov. 8, 2021, in order for candidates to comply with the one-year residency rule,” Snyder-Hall said. “So why are these changes being made four months after that deadline?”

On the General Assembly’s redistricting website, the changes are described as a “clean-up” and are said to be the result of recommendations from the state’s Department of Elections. The site does not allow for a side-by-side or overlay comparison of the maps.

Specifically, House Bill 335 “makes changes to the Senate and House of Representatives districts so as to minimize the need for new election districts and increase the efficiency of election administration,” the bill’s synopsis says.

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# GRANTS ALLOCATED TO BRING HIGH-SPEED INTERNET TO EVERY DELAWARE HOME

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Every Delaware home will have access to high-speed wired broadband internet thanks to \$56 million in federal infrastructure grants. Grants were awarded to Comcast, Verizon and Mediacom—Delaware’s three largest service providers. Comcast will receive \$33.1 million, Verizon will receive \$11.8 million and Mediacom will receive \$11.1 million.

With those funds, the three companies will extend their existing coverage areas to serve more than 11,600 Delaware homes and businesses that do not have access to high-speed broadband service. Construction is expected to begin in the next few weeks.

“Stable, high-speed internet connection is important for all Delaware families, students, and businesses,” Gov. John Carney said in a press release. “Now, with the availability of federal funds, we are on our way to giving Delawareans across the state access to connect to school, work, health care, and more.”

Over the next 36 months, Comcast, Verizon and Mediacom will build out and extend current infrastructure to deliver fixed, wireline internet access with transmission speeds that, at a minimum, provide 100 megabits per second download speed and 20 megabits per second upload speed.

Delawareans can find out if their area has internet access and report addresses that don’t have internet access to Delaware’s [Broadband Hub](#). The Delaware Department of Technology and Information plans to update the interactive map with expansion project updates and real-time data. Addresses reported as lacking service during the construction phase will be included within the current project.

The broadband infrastructure grants are part of the \$110 million commitment to broadband infrastructure Carney announced in Aug. 2021.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

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

One in three Delawareans will get cancer. Unfortunately, many have put off their cancer screenings in the past year. Screenings detect cancer early, when it's most treatable. If you've skipped or canceled a screening due to the pandemic — for breast, cervical, colon, lung, or prostate cancer — don't wait one more day. **Call your health care provider to schedule your cancer screenings today.**

If you don't have a provider, we can help. If you are uninsured or underinsured, you may be eligible for free screenings. To learn more about eligibility requirements and recommended cancer screenings, and other information, please visit [HealthyDelaware.org/Cancer](https://HealthyDelaware.org/Cancer).

### To schedule your cancer screening by phone:

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# RANDY HOLLAND, RETIRED DELAWARE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, DIES AT 75

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Retired Delaware Supreme Court Justice Randy J. Holland has died. He was 75.

Holland was appointed and reappointed to the Delaware Supreme Court by three different governors and served with four different chief justices during his tenure on the bench. At his appointment to the state's Supreme Court in 1986 by Gov. Mike Castle, Holland became the youngest person ever to serve on the state's highest court. He would go on to become the court's longest-serving justice at his retirement in March 2017.

Throughout his 30 years on the bench, Holland wrote more than 700 reported opinions and several thousand case dispositive orders.

"The Delaware Judiciary mourns the loss of one of our greatest public servants," said Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr. who served with Justice Holland from 2015 to 2017. Holland "wrote cogent and authoritative opinions in all areas of the law that have withstood the test of time," Sietz said. "He championed the highest ethical standards for Delaware lawyers and judges."

Holland was born on Jan. 27, 1947, in Elizabeth, New Jersey, the oldest child of James Holland and Virginia Holland. Shortly after his birth, Holland's family moved to Milford, Delaware. He attended Milford High School, where he was quarterback and captain of the football team and a catcher on the baseball team. While in high school, he met his future wife, Ilona E. Holland.

Justice Holland graduated from Swarthmore College and the University of Pennsylvania Law School, where he received the Loughlin Award for legal ethics. He later earned a Master of Laws in Judicial Process from the University of Virginia Law School and was awarded honorary Doctor of Law degrees by the Delaware Law School and Swarthmore College.

Justice Holland taught corporate governance, appellate practice and state constitutional law and frequently focused on business ethics.

After leaving the Delaware Supreme Court, he became Senior of Counsel in the Wilmington office of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati.

In 2018, the Randy J. Holland Family Law Endowment was created in his honor for the Combined Campaign for Justice to fund a full-time fellowship position to serve the family law needs for low-income families.

U.S. Sen. Tom Carper reappointed Holland to his second term on the bench when he was governor.

"His longevity on the bench was a result of his broad knowledge of the law and of our state, and the respect and professionalism he upheld on and off the bench," Carper said. "Delaware—and its judicial system—is a better place because of his service on the bench."

Gov. John Carney called Holland's passing a "tremendous loss for our state."

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# VOTER REGISTRATION BILL CLEARS SENATE COMMITTEE



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A bill to require Delaware cities and towns to use the state's voter registration system for local elections overcame its first legislative hurdle March 16.

Under [Senate Bill 233](#), sponsored by Sen. Tizzy Lockman, D-Wilmington, voters who live within town limits could vote in their municipal elections without having to register separately with both the state and the city. The bill was heard by the Senate Elections and Government Affairs Committee and, if released, will head to the Senate floor for a vote.

Proponents say the bill will increase voter turnout and eliminate a problem wherein voters arrive to vote in municipal elections only to be turned away because they did not know they had to register with the town.

Opponents say the bill infringes on municipalities' autonomy and that cities should be able to decide how

to run their own elections. The bill has exceptions that provide for local control, including a provision that allows municipalities to maintain their own voter rolls for non-resident voters like business owners and seasonal-resident property owners.

In an interview with Delaware/Town Square LIVE News, Lockman said she doesn't think the current voter registration system was intentionally designed to keep people from voting, but that it has had that effect.

"In some of our municipalities there is this divide between registration for elections on the state level and elections on a municipal level," she said. "That has had the impact of disenfranchising voters who are not aware of what is a surprising and somewhat illogical system."

Towns that already use the state's voter registration system include Camden, Delaware City, Dover, Elsmere, Georgetown, Harrington, New Castle, Newark, Smyrna, Townsend, Wilmington, and Wyoming. The rest operate their own registries and would have to transfer to the state's system if Senate Bill 233 passes.

Switching over, Lockman said, wouldn't be burdensome on the municipalities or even cost them any money, and the Department of Elections would be there every step of the way to ensure that the transition is a "positive integration."

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# SENATE PASSES TAX RELIEF FOR RETIRED MILITARY, FIRST RESPONDERS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The State Senate on March 15 unanimously approved two bills to provide tax relief for retired service members and first responders living in Delaware. If made law, [Senate Substitute 1 for Senate Bill 188](#) will exclude up to \$12,500 worth of military pension income from state tax calculations for all retired service members, regardless of age, starting in 2023.

“Our nation’s retired service members, each of whom bravely and dutifully served this country for 20 years or more, deserve more than just our words of gratitude and appreciation,” said Sen. Spiros Mantzavinos, the bill’s sponsor. “They deserve a state tax system that respects their sacrifice and gives them the breathing room they need to survive on the retirement benefits they earned through their service to this nation.”

By increasing the tax exclusion for retired service members, Mantzavinos, D-Elsmere, said the bill will also offer individuals who retire from the military in their 30s or 40s an incentive to begin a second career in Delaware.

According to a press release from the Senate Democratic Caucus, there are 26 states that tax personal income completely exclude military pensions from their taxable income calculations. Nine others, including Delaware, offer partial tax exemptions.

Under current state tax law, a \$12,500 pension exclusion is only available to residents over the age of 60, while younger retirees, including retired service members, are only eligible for a \$2,000 pension exclusion.

The Senate also passed legislation to double the state tax credit available to active members of volunteer fire, ambulance, and rescue service companies.

Sponsored by Sen. Bruce Ennis, D-Smyrna, [Senate Bill 189](#) would increase the credit against the income tax liability available to resident first responders from \$500 to \$1,000.

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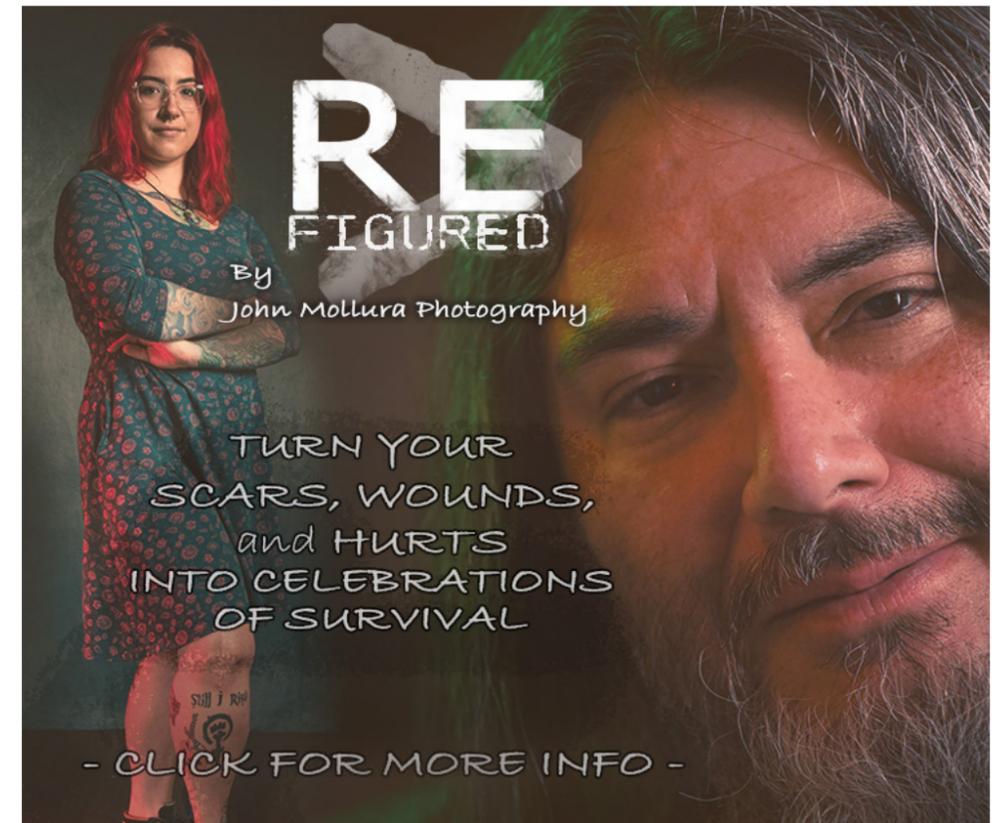


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# EDUCATION

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# FREIRE WITHDRAWS REQUEST TO OPEN CHARTER SCHOOL IN NEWARK



BY JAREK RUTZ

Freire Schools has withdrawn its request to expand and put a charter school in Newark.

Nate Durant, co-head of school at Freire Charter School-Wilmington, said in a note to state education officials that the move didn't seem smart at the moment, when schools were grappling with many issues.

“Positive impact can only happen when we are all working together,” the letter said. “But we are not together right now, and any division hurts our kids.”

Freire, which also has three schools in Philadelphia, released a copy of the letter in an email.

Officials there declined to comment further.

The letter was addressed to Department of Education Secretary Mark Holodick, the Delaware State Board of Education, Charter School Accountability Committee, and the Charter Schools Office.

“The department, through the Charter School Accountability Committee, worked closely with Freire Charter School regarding its application for a new charter school in the Newark area,” said Alison May, spokeswoman for the Department of Education.

“We respect the school’s decision to withdraw its application at this time and will continue to provide the necessary supports to Freire and all of our charter

schools as they focus on providing strong educational services to Delaware students.”

Durant said that the intention behind bringing a second Freire school to Delaware was to create a positive impact on Delaware students and families that were looking to find the best option for their education.

He said that a sense of togetherness is vital during this “trying time” for educators, schools, communities, and the state of Delaware.

The note comes after the Christina School Board voted to ask the state to put a moratorium on new or expanding charter schools as it grapples with getting the Wilmington Learning Collaborative up and running, as well as other issues.

The move has drawn fire from parents and others who favor parents having the choice of a charter school for their children.

“We ask that you join us in realigning so that the “us” versus ‘them’ feeling dissolves,” the letter said, “and we can work together to provide the strongest education possible for every Delaware student.”

Durant said in the letter that Freire-Wilmington is still committed and determined to the families and students of the school and their educational excellence.

Freire-Wilmington opened its doors in 2015 with support from the Longwood Foundation, the Welfare Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education. It has 2,000 students in its four schools.

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# BILLS TO ADD MENTAL HEALTH HELP IN SCHOOLS SENT TO HOUSE FLOOR

BY JAREK RUTZ

The House Education Committee on March 16 unanimously voted to release two bills focused on putting additional mental health resources into Delaware schools. House Bills 300 and 301 serve as an extension of [House Bill 100](#), legislation passed in 2021 that included an \$8 million investment to provide mental health services in the state's elementary schools.

HB 300 calls for more mental health care professionals in middle schools to decrease the ratio of students to school therapists, psychologists and counselors. HB 301 calls for a statewide implementation of educational mental health programs in each grade level, kindergarten through 12th grade. The bills will now move to the house floor.

Sponsor Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, said Delaware's youth is plagued by a high percentage of suicide attempts and documented cases of depression. Among other things, she said, is that suicide is the second-leading cause of death of people between 10-24 years of age, 50% of mental health illness begins before age 14, and one in five kids suffer from depression.

Anne Slease, director of advocacy and education at National Alliance on Mental Illness in Delaware, said 53% of Delaware's youth received no treatment for their depression in the past year. "When children's warning signs of mental illness are identified and addressed at a young age, recovery is not only possible, but it's likely," she said.

Rep. Michael Ramone, R-Pike Creek South, expressed concerns about being able to get enough professionals to take the jobs, which would offer salaries of \$77,000. With HB 100, which took effect in January, there already has been trouble filling the available slots in elementary schools and he wondered if the state would be able to fill even more. Longhurst said that fear shouldn't stop legislators from passing the bill.

"We shouldn't hold back just because we don't have enough professionals," she said. "We should be moving forward in order to create that pipeline."

"If we build it, they will come," is a common belief in regard to the professional pipeline that Department of Education Secretary Mark Holodick, Rep. Kimberly Williams, D-Marshallton, and parents giving public comments all shared.

Rep. Richard Collins, R-Millsboro, noted that COVID-19 has resulted in a surge of mental health illness and questioned how the committee will know if the monetary investment is worthwhile.

Longhurst said mental health issues have been a serious problem for years. "This is not a political issue—our kids killed themselves because of unaddressed mental health issues, not COVID," said Longhurst. A school environment encourages students to speak up on mental health challenges, she said.

Chris Locke, whose son Sean committed suicide in 2018 just before his 24th birthday, said he believes schools need to teach the "power of vulnerability" to allow students to feel comfortable and safe talking about mental health struggles.

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# SPORTS

PHOTO BY NICK HALLIDAY

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# DELAWARE TECH'S BASEBALL TEAM RANKED 8TH IN NATION

BY NICK HALLIDAY

To say Delaware Technical Community College's baseball team is off to a hot start would be an understatement. Delaware Tech is 19-0 and ranked eighth in the nation in the latest National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division II poll. The team has an overall batting average of .355, has scored 163 total runs, and has hammered 27 home runs. Recently, the team has pulled off impressive wins over Harford Community College, a perennial powerhouse in Maryland, and Bucks County Community College, which plays in the United States Collegiate Athletic Association.

"We had a really good fall and built a lot of confidence as a group," Head Coach Stu Madden said. "Every game

we go into, the guys are fully confident we will find a way to win, and that confidence goes a long way.

"We have a group of guys who are really talented and have bought into the team aspect of what we are doing. There are guys who have experience winning and are bringing that to the team and buying into the team culture that the coaches are teaching."

Madden said the team has been clicking in all three phases of the game—hitting, pitching and defense. The stats back that up.

First baseman Matt Rodriguez (Delmar High School) is batting .554 with 31 hits, 23 RBI and five home runs. His batting average places him 12th in the nation. Center

fielder Mike Paigliei (Brandywine High School) is batting .458 with 22 hits, 28 RBI and four home runs. His RBI numbers have him tied for seventh in the nation.

Second baseman Chase Boyle (Sussex Central High School) has an on base percentage of .481 with 20 hits and 12 RBI; outfielder Jonathan Golebiowski (Delaware Military Academy) has an on base percentage of .486 with 20 hits, 14 RBI and four home runs; designated hitter Chris Friend (Caesar Rodney High School) has a .462 on base percentage with 11 hits, 14 RBI and four home runs; and catcher Ethan Watkinson (Sussex Central High School) has an on base percentage of .4397 with 18 hits and 13 RBI.

"It's not just one, two, or even three guys who can do it," Madden said. "Every single guy has the ability to get the big hit. Everyone on the team believes the next guy will be able to get it done, they believe someone is going to do something to get the win.

"Every guy in the lineup has gotten a big key hit for us to win the game, and that's nice as a coach to watch and have the confidence in every guy in the lineup to be able to win the game."

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# BONES DROPS 21 IN HOMECOMING GAME

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Nah'Shon "Bones" Hyland dropped 21 points for the Denver Nuggets to help defeat the Philadelphia 76ers in his homecoming game. Hyland made four decisive three-pointers in the fourth quarter to help lead the Nuggets past the Philadelphia 76ers 114-110 on Monday night.

Bones, a Delaware native, played his high school basketball at St. Georges Tech. Since being drafted, Monday was his first time playing in front of a home crowd. The Wells Fargo Center was sold out with 21,000 people in the building and it was estimated at about 600-700 of them were Delawareans who made the trip to see their local star play in his rookie season in the NBA.

Bones was given a special gift by a special group of people at the game. Wilmington firefighters and first responders presented Nah'Shon with a custom Wilmington Fire Department jacket. Hyland jumped up into the crowd to pose with the firefighters and first responders to pose for a picture with his new jacket.

Bones was involved in a house fire back in 2018 that the Wilmington firefighters and first responders helped save his life. Unfortunately, the house fire cost his cousin and grandmother their lives. Bones was very emotional at the end of the game when asked what the firefighters and first responders meant to him.

Hyland is having a great rookie season for the Nuggets. He is averaging 9.1 points a game, 2.7 rebounds, 2.3 assists, and is shooting 36.7 percent from the three-point line. He had a career-high 27 points against the Los Angeles Lakers on Jan. 15 this year. In that game, he netted six three-pointers, another career high for Bones.

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# TOWER HILL WINS FIRST BASKETBALL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP WITH PERFORMANCE FOR THE AGES



BY JOE SINGLES

The No. 3 seed Tower Hill took on the No. 1 seed Salesianum in the DIAA boys' basketball state championship game at University of Delaware March 12 in a match-up of first-time finals participant—the Hillers—and multiple championship winner Salesianum High School. Tower Hill earned its way here Thursday night with a combination of well executed offensive and a well coached man-to-man defense which carried it passed Seaford without much resistance. Sallies also had similar success in their semifinal matchup against Howard High to avenge a loss to the Wildcats in the regular season.

Despite the uncharted waters that Tower Hill found itself in, nerves were not a factor as the Hillers came out on fire shooting a scolding six for seven from the three-point line in the first quarter. Sallies called timeout midway through the quarter to attempt to cool the Hillers down, but it only temporarily stopped the hot shooting. Sallies had no answer for the time being as they trailed 18-4 at the end of the quarter.

The unbelievable shooting carried right over to the beginning of the second quarter as Davis Bland made two deep threes in the first minute of the second to extend the

lead to 24-4 with 5:25 to go in the half. Sallies continued to play hard, but found it difficult to generate anything offensively as the lead ballooned to 30-7 with 2:30 to go in the half. Sallies would go on a mini run in the last minute of the half, but Tower Hill would answer usually on the very next possession leaving the Sallies with a tremendous amount of ground to make up in the second half. The Hillers shot 53% from the field and 52% from the three-point line, while Sallies shot just 12.5% from threes and 25% from the field.

Sallies came out with a renewed sense of purpose in the third, grabbing their first offensive rebound of the game and trapping Tower Hill on every opportunity which seemed to slow the Hiller offense at least temporarily. Bland continued to be the story of the game so far as the senior swingman for Tower Hill made his first two three-point attempts of the half to give the Hillers a 41-16 lead with 4:29 to go in the quarter. Although the Sallies pressure gave the Hillers a challenge, they were up to the task as they methodically found gaps in the press which led to easy layups on a number of possessions. The quarter ended as it began with Bland releasing another deep three-point shot that went down giving him six made three-pointers on nine attempts.

Tower Hill would knock down yet another three-point shot on the opening position of the fourth quarter to extend its lead to 30 points making the game clock just as much of an opponent for Sallies as the Hillers. Sallies looked to foul early in the quarter, but the Hillers played smart and made cross court passes and avoided a large number of fouls attempts. As the quarter hit the four-minute mark, the outcome seems to be a foregone conclusion as the Sals were unable to convert on the offensive end and Tower Hill made free throw after free throw to eventually give the Hillers a 35-point lead with 2:30 to go in the game.

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