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Wilmington Airport Growth Pays Off



Judge Refuses to Block Assault Rifle, Magazine Laws



DelTech Adds Two More to the 100-Hit Club

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# Headlines

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# RESCUE DOG ON ITS WAY TO BE NAMED OFFICIAL STATE ANIMAL

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware General Assembly did not go to the dogs Wednesday. The dogs came to them. Four lucky pooches who were up for adoption or had been adopted from shelters, sat through part of a Senate hearing and then part of a Senate Session as [Senate Bill 37](#), which would make the rescue dog the official state animal, passed in committee and then on the Senate floor.

Along the way, Sen. Trey Pardee, D-Dover, left his perch at the table after talking about a casino bill in the Senate Elections and Government Affairs Committee to sit in the doorway, where he pulled a puppy into his lap, and then pet a larger dog that wanted its fair share of attention.

It all led to an amusing scene as Secretary of Finance Rick Geisenberger sat surrounded by dogs as he testified in favor of Pardee's [Senate Bill 64](#). That bill would allow casinos to reduce license fees by investing in their facilities.

Sponsored by Sen. Jack Walsh, D-Stanton/Newport, SB 37 stops the practice of naming a new state animal every two years in favor of declaring the rescue dog the one and only state animal for all eternity.

Walsh, who pointed out both in the committee and on the Senate floor, that he had worn his doggie tie and doggie socks, said the bill that first designated the rescue dog as the official state animal had expired in 2019.

## RESCUE DOG DEFINITION

The owner of a rescue dog named Maisie, Walsh explained that rescue dogs were not animals who rescued humans, but dogs that found themselves at shelters and needed homes. The senator said he is a board member of the Delaware SPCA, which has merged with the Delaware Humane Society to become the [Humane Animal Partners](#).

“These are loving animals that have done nothing,” he said. “You know they deserve a loving home.”

Less than an hour later in the Senate, after the doggies had sat through the several appointments and a resolution honoring Vietnam veterans on the 50th anniversary of the day that the American military left Vietnam, Walsh was back at the microphone pleading his case.

“I would highly recommend that you visit one because it warms your heart and it breaks your heart at the same time,” he told the Senate.

Sen. Marie Pinkney, D-Bear, had a word of warning for Walsh.

“I want the sponsor to know that if I go home with a dog today, I’m going to very upset with him, and I wanted to be added as a sponsor for the bill,” she said.

The bill passed unanimously and is headed to the House for a committee hearing.

Also Tuesday:

- Pardee’s casino bill was reported out of committee with one favorable vote and four on its merit, moments after the committee and moments before the full Senate meeting. Senate committees do not vote in public and the public has to keep looking on the bill tracker to see what happened.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# NEW CASTLE VO-TECH TO GET \$113,016 FROM JUUL LAWSUIT

BY JAREK RUTZ

**New Castle County Vocational Technical District** will receive \$113,016 as part of Delaware’s \$8 million share of the settlement of a national lawsuit against **JUUL Labs**, an electric cigarette company.

Delaware school districts in recent months have been holding executive meetings to discuss the settlement, but declining to say anything about it in public. The suit was settled in September 2022. New Castle County Vo-Tech’s board may have been the first in the state to publicly announce its portion of the settlement when it did so Monday night.

“We can expect to receive about \$82,000 after court costs and legal fees,” said Sean Sokolowski, the district’s business director. “By agreeing to the settlement, the dis-

trict would be releasing all claims in this matter, but the attorney has reviewed the documents and recommends that we agree to this.”

JUUL Labs and 34 states and territories reached an agreement after a two-year investigation into the company’s marketing and sales practices, which were said to prey on children and teenagers.

Delaware will receive between \$7.8 million and \$8.5 million. The amount each district receives seems to be based on district enrollment, although no district has released the actual formula publicly. The number of elementary school students seems to count more than the number of middle school and high school students. The majority of Vo-Tech students are in high school.

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# DELAWARE LOTTERY TO ALLOW DEBIT CARDS, ADD DRAWING NEXT YEAR

BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware Lottery plans to allow patrons of top lottery ticket sellers to use their debit cards to buy tickets over the counter. The lottery also will add a Sunday drawing to two of its popular draw games.

The two moves are expected to help the lottery add another \$2.4 million to the state budget in fiscal year 2024, which starts July 1, and \$6 million in fiscal year 2025. The lottery this year added \$326 million to the state general fund, said Helene Keeley, executive director of the Delaware Lottery,

Since its founding in 1975, the lottery has only allowed cash to be used to buy a ticket over the counter. The lottery did allow debit cards to be used in machines that sell tickets in places such as Wawa and Royal Farms. By this time next year—which would be the third quarter of the state’s fiscal year—the lottery plans to let its top

100 retailers begin taking debit cards—but not credit cards or other forms of cashless payments such as Venmo or Apple Pay.

The Lottery also plans to add a Sunday night drawing to its popular Play 3 and Play 4 games. Right now, the games have a drawing each morning and each evening Monday through Saturday, but only a morning drawing on Sunday.

“People are loyal to certain products. And in all our research in all our surveys that we do, it’s very apparent that people are loyal,” Keeley said. “Our decision to add the Sunday evening draw was based upon research. We’re not just saying, ‘Let’s add this draw and hopefully people who play the evening draw on a regular basis will come along and do that.’”

Draw games bring in more revenue than the national

Powerball and Mega Millions games. The lottery pulled in \$34.6 million for its Play 3 games and \$28.7 million from Play 4 games. It sold \$23.5 million in Powerball tickets, \$11.1 million for the Mega Million, but just \$2.8 million in Lotto America tickets. Keeley said she was not aware of any plans to expand the number of Mega-Millions draws per week, like PowerBall has done.

The lottery’s \$825.2 million in revenue in the 2022 fiscal year including \$416.5 million from video slots, followed by draw games at \$119.8 million, instant games at \$110.9 million, the sports lottery at \$109.5 million, table games at \$56.3 million and I-Gaming \$12 million according to its website. The lottery transferred \$284.6 million to the state of Delaware, with \$233 million transferred to the state’s general fund, \$50 to the Department of Agriculture, and \$1.5 million to the Department of Health & Human Services..

Revenues in this past fiscal year are higher in absolute terms than they’ve been going back at least 20 years, during which revenues fluctuated between \$600 and \$700 million. The 2019 fiscal year was the second highest in terms of absolute revenue, with the lottery making \$782.7 million, followed by \$770.7 million in 2021, \$755.1 million in 2007, 742.2 million in 2011, and \$674 million in 2002.

One interesting aspect of the lottery showed up in last week’s meeting of the Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Committee: Lottery fatigue. Record jackpots like July 2022’s \$1.3 billion Mega Millions ticket and November 2022’s \$2.04 billion Powerball ticket add to the state coffers.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# Culture

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photo link: Clear Space Theatre Company



# MOUNT PLEASANT LETS IT GO WITH 'FROZEN' MUSICAL THIS WEEKEND

BY JAREK RUTZ

Chris Turner knew immense pressure would come with being one of only 51 high schools in the country allowed to perform Disney's "Frozen" on stage. The **Mount Pleasant High School** drama director hopes that pressure will create diamonds, and a memorable show for folks in the **Brandywine School District** community and beyond.

"We knew we were the only school doing it in, the only school allowed to do it in the state," he said. "And the [Broadway] tour has not played in the Philadelphia area yet."

Mount Pleasant's show—which started Wednesday and ran through Saturday, April 1, with a 2 p.m. matinee Saturday—was the first production for anyone who hasn't seen "Frozen" on Broadway, he said, so the Disney magic is a lot to live up to.

He and his crew of 60 students created a wish list of items they wanted to bring the popular movie to life. Keeping in mind the production's budget helped narrow his list. Typically, he said, he tried to keep production costs under \$20,000, and the money largely depends on ticket sales for the previous year's performances.

"We knew we needed snow, we knew we wanted a video wall," he said. "Our technical director knew that the existing lighting that we had, which is not much, was not going to work for what we wanted to do. When people walk in, we want everyone to feel like they are immersed in the Disney experience."

Several local organizations also chipped in to help the school.

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## KALMAR NYCKEL CENTER UNVEILS PAINTING OF SHIP'S LAST BATTLE

BY BETSY PRICE

The Kalmar Nyckel Foundation threw a party on Saturday to unveil its new exhibit: A painting of Delaware's tall ship in the 1652 battle in which it sank. The exhibit includes a newly commissioned oil painting by well-respected Baltimore artist Patrick O'Brien that is hung at head level on a second-floor wall in the Copeland Maritime Center, along with information about the battle between the Dutch and the English.

The painting becomes a wall-sized exhibit directly above, shown on a 10-foot-by-24-foot backlit light box that add a sense of drama to the Main Deck room while letting the viewer feel the power of the art.

The installation was celebrated Saturday, April 1, with hands-on activities such as sail handling, cannon loading, LEGO ship building, scavenger hunts and free tours

of the Kalmar Nyckel's deck. Face painting was offered for a fee.

The final battle painting, dubbed "Battle of Buchan Ness: Epitaph for an Exceptional Ship," has its genesis in the work of Jordi Noort, a foundation intern from the Netherlands. The foundation had known that the Kalmar Nyckel had switched hands from Dutch owners to Swedish—who used it to bring settlers to Delaware in 1638, helping create New Sweden with settlements stretching up into the Philadelphia area—and then sold back to the Dutch. Noort was able to help search Swedish and Dutch archives for more definitive information, including its sinking in battle.

"We have more documents from this three-month episode of the ship's story than the rest of its career," said

Sam Heed, senior historian and director of education.

The Kalmar Nyckel joined the Dutch naval fleet protecting that country's herring catch in a battle off the coast of Scotland.

"This 'Battle of Buchan Ness' was the first official engagement of the First Anglo-Dutch War, a contest over global trading empires, fishing rights and control of the seas around the British Isles," Heed said.

There are no paintings or illustrations of that battle, he said.

### KALMAR NYCKEL PAINTING

"One of my jobs is public interpretation and getting the visitors and students to visualize and see the battle," Heed said.

The foundation agreed there should be a painting and Delaware philanthropist Arkadi Kuhlmann agreed to pay for it. The foundation declined to reveal the amount of the donation. Heed himself researched maritime painters and found he really liked O'Brien's use of light and was captivated by his ocean scenes.

Because O'Brien lives in Baltimore, the artist was able to visit the center and see the reproduction Kalmar Nyckel himself. Sailing on the ship not only allowed O'Brien to examine it closely, but imagine life on the ship in the 1600s, he said in a press release.

To conjure the roar of the cannons and the smoke and flames of a naval battle, he read the journals of sailors from that time, logbooks of captains and letters written by adventurous mariners.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# Business

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photo credit: fauxels / PEXELS





# WILMINGTON AIRPORT GROWTH YIELDS \$850,000 MORE FROM U.S.

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

The resumption of passenger service at Wilmington Airport, with Avelo Airlines flying to and from five Florida destinations, means that the airport qualifies for \$850,000 more in federal funding. The airport “will programmatically be able to assume an annual federal entitlement of \$1 million,” according to its owner-operator, the Delaware River and Bay Authority. As a General Aviation Reliever Airport, the airport previously earned a non-primary entitlement of \$150,000.

On Feb. 1, Avelo began service at the Wilmington Airport with 149-seat, Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft, with flights to Orlando, West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Tampa and Fort Myers. Since then, nearly 22,000 passengers have either boarded or disembarked an Avelo flights.

And if Avelo succeeds with service—that’s a huge question, considering the number of companies that

have tried—the New Castle airport could qualify for more federal funding. The annual minimum entitlement is \$1 million as a Commercial Service Airport, and the annual maximum is \$26 million.

“We’re proud to achieve this milestone again and, if the trend in demand continues, 50,000 enplanements will be quickly on the horizon,” Stephen D. Williams, deputy executive director of the authority, said in a statement.

### 383 AIRPORTS NATIONWIDE

The airport is one of 383 airports nationwide, and Delaware’s only one, with the classification. The airport also receives revenue from the Federal Aviation Administration’s passenger facility charge. It is authorized to collect up to \$1.3 million until 2024 at \$4.39 per passenger.

Orlando is by far Wilmington’s most popular destination, with the other four roughly tied. In all five

destinations, so far more people have flown from Wilmington than have returned, which reflects snowbirds heading south for the winter.

Avelo was founded as a charter service in 1987 and started commercial passenger service in 2021. Last October, it **announced** service for Wilmington. Budget carrier Frontier Airlines **operated** flights out of Wilmington Airport between 2013 and 2015, then again for half of 2021 before suspending service.

Because Delaware’s airports are so small, they logged only 94 delays in the first 11 months of 2022, making them dead last in Bureau of Transportation Statistics data, according to Family Destinations Guide. West Virginia was 49th, with 9,019, and California first, with 1,344,218.





# CHRISTIANACARE'S PA 'MICRO' HOSPITAL TO OPEN IN LATE '24

**BY KEN MAMMARELLA**

Christiana Care **plans** to restore medical services in late 2024 to Jennersville Hospital, which has been closed since 2021. The Delaware-based system will open what Pennsylvania calls a micro hospital, with 10 emergency department beds, 10 inpatient beds and imaging services. The opening date is subject to change due to the significant work that will be required to renovate the West Grove Campus, to update the health care and information technology.

In June 2022, ChristianaCare finalized the purchase of the site from Tower Health, which in 2021 **said** the hospital was licensed for 63 beds and had a medical staff of 350.

ChristianaCare in 2022 received a \$2.5 million American Rescue Fund Plan Act grant from **Chester County**, a \$1.5 million ARPA grant from **Pennsylvania** and a \$1 million grant from Pennsylvania to assist in upgrades. Neither the latest announcement nor the announce-

ments on the earlier grants indicated how much the renovations will cost.

The hospital will offer emergency care and behavioral health emergency care. Its diagnostic capabilities including ultrasound, CT scans, X-rays and laboratory services. It will have access to ChristianaCare's network of specialists and support services through virtual consults.

## OTHER HOSPITALS AND FACILITIES

ChristianaCare is Delaware's largest private employer and runs 11 **facilities** in Delaware, Maryland and Pennsylvania. In 2022, it **announced** a deal to buy four hospitals and related facilities in southeastern Pennsylvania and **ended** up not doing it.

Since 2020, ChristianaCare has provided primary care in three practices in southern Chester County, in Jennersville (basically, on the West Grove Campus), West Grove and Kennett Square. The West Grove practice has recently brought on additional providers and will soon begin offering virtual visits with ChristianaCare specialists. These three practices are now the "medical home" for 22,000.

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# Food & Dining

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# WILMINGTON CHEFS JOIN TO CREATE JAMES BEARD SUNDAY SUPPER

BY PAM GEORGE

In many households, Sunday supper means gathering with loved ones and a table full of comfort food. But beginning at 5 p.m. on Sunday, April 23, Wilmington's finest chefs will kick the beloved family-style meal up a notch at Sunday Supper Wilmington in **The Chancery Market Food Hall & Bar**, located at 1313 N. Market St.

Part of the James Beard Foundation's **Friends of James Beard Benefit** series, the event is being organized by the **It's Time Wilmington** campaign and sponsored by **Johnson Commercial Real Estate**, which developed the 12,000-square-foot food hall.

Joining The Chancery Market will be Antimo DiMeo from **Bardea Food & Drink** and **Bardea Steak**, Tyler Aiken from **Le Cavalier**, Michael DiBianca from **Ciro Food & Drink** and **Ciro 40 Acres** and Joe DeLago from **The Quoin**.

"It is a culmination of the city's diverse downtown

restaurant scene, from high-end dining to casual," explained Katie Zamarra, spokesperson for It's Time, which promotes Wilmington's offerings and people.

The James Beard Foundation is named for one of America's first celebrity chefs. James Beard was a cook-book author, TV personality and teacher, and the foundation's mission is to support and promote the people behind America's food scene. For instance, consider the prestigious James Beard Foundation Awards, which recognize movers and shakers nationwide. DiMeo and DiBianca have both been nominated in the past.

"Chef DiBianca is a three-time semifinalist for the James Beard Mid-Atlantic Chef of the Year, so it is something near and dear to him to give back to the organization that helps to harvest and recognize excellence in the restaurant industry," said Venu Gaddamidi, co-owner of **Ciro**.

## JAMES BEARD DINNER

The April 23 event is not the first time a James Beard Foundation benefit has been held in a food hall.

"Suppers have been featured in prominent city food halls such as New York's Chelsea Market, D.C.'s Union Market and Atlanta's Ponce City Market," Zamarra explained. It makes for an unusual menu.

"The cuisine is aimed at highlighting the strengths of each restaurant," Akin said.

The reception will feature hors d'oeuvres from **Fuku**—owned by celebrity chef David Chang—and **Market Street Burger and Dog**, both Chancery Market Food Hall restaurants. **The Juice Joint**, also in the food hall, will provide the juice for a signature cocktail. (There will also be sparkling wine and a local brewery's beer.)

The Chancery Market vendor Justin Womack of **Oath 84** will handle the appetizer course, while Nikita Thomas of **Rooted AF**, a vegan restaurant, will do the salad. Well-known area chef and The Chancery Market vendor Dan Butler of **Toscana Pizza e Panini** will prepare pasta.

The main proteins will be handled by DiMeo, who will make braised American Iberico pork cheek, and Tyle Aiken of **Le Cavalier**, who will prepare veal rougette Mourvèdre with verjus, olives, grapes and marjoram. DiBianca of **Ciro** and **Kati Roll Wala**, a vendor in The Chancery Market, will present the sides.

Guests will then enjoy dessert from Joe DeLago of **The Quoin Restaurant** and coffee from **Espresso** coffee bar, owned by the mother-daughter team Diane Losado and Angie Hernandez.

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photo credit: Delaware.gov

# Government

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# STATE BENEFITS COMMITTEE MAY EXTEND RETIREE HEALTH PLAN AGAIN

BY SAM HAUT

A state committee will vote April 24 on whether to once again extend retirees current health insurance for another six months. The State Employee Benefits Committee will vote on a recommendation from its retiree subcommittee about whether to extend the current plan, as it did in October amid an uproar over a planned change.

The need for the plan to be extended stems from an uproar over the benefits committee's plan to move all retirees into a Highmark Medicare Advantage plan instead of the generous Medicfill plan that operates more like a standard supplement plan.

Retirees sued to stop the move, which they characterized as done in secret—it wasn't—and violated promises

made by the state to retirees. A Delaware Supreme Court judge agreed, ordering a temporary stay on the proposed Medicare Advantage plan. According to the retirees' RISE Delaware [website](#), they want to stay on the Medicfill plan for the next three years while the committee and subcommittees look at other options.

Claire DeMatteis, secretary of the Delaware Department of Human Resources, has said that it would cost the state an additional \$6.8 million to \$7.5 million a month to keep the current retiree health plan compared to the proposed Highmark Medicare Advantage program.

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# RICHARDSON URGES CARNEY TO VETO MARIJUANA BILLS

BY SAM HAUT

Sen. Bryant Richardson has asked Gov. John Carney to veto bills dealing with the legalization of marijuana.

“The dangers associated with legalization of recreational marijuana were ignored by those who voted for the bills,” the Laurel lawmaker said in an open letter he released Friday. “But the dangers are real.”

**House Bill 1** and **House Bill 2** would legalize recreational marijuana in Delaware and set up a department and tax structure for an industry that would legally grow and sell cannabis. The structure is similar to that used for taxing alcohol.

Carney’s office did not immediately respond to requests for a comment.

Richardson said that as of mid-August 2022, marijuana was associated with the deaths of six Delaware

children and near deaths of 63 in cases of neglect. In 2021, there were 70 cases for the year, a 35 percent increase over the previous year.

Republicans have largely been opposed to the two bills, sponsored by Ed Osienski, D-Newark, as they have been for several years. But with a Democratic supermajority in the Senate and a Democratic majority in the House, the GOP lawmakers can do little to stop the pot train. Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, and Rep. Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, voted for legalization, and Rep. Jeffrey Spiegelman, R-Townsend/Hartley, voted for both bills.

A legalization bill did make it to Carney last year, but Carney swatted it down with a veto and the state House didn’t have enough votes to override it. Osienski believes

new factors will lead Carney to sign the bills, but Carney has given no public indication that he will.

However, his office requested changes to House Bill 2 in the form of an **amendment** that passed by voice vote. It made technical corrections and clarifications.

Richardson says he’s heard both that Carney will reject and that he will sign it and has no idea what the governor will do.

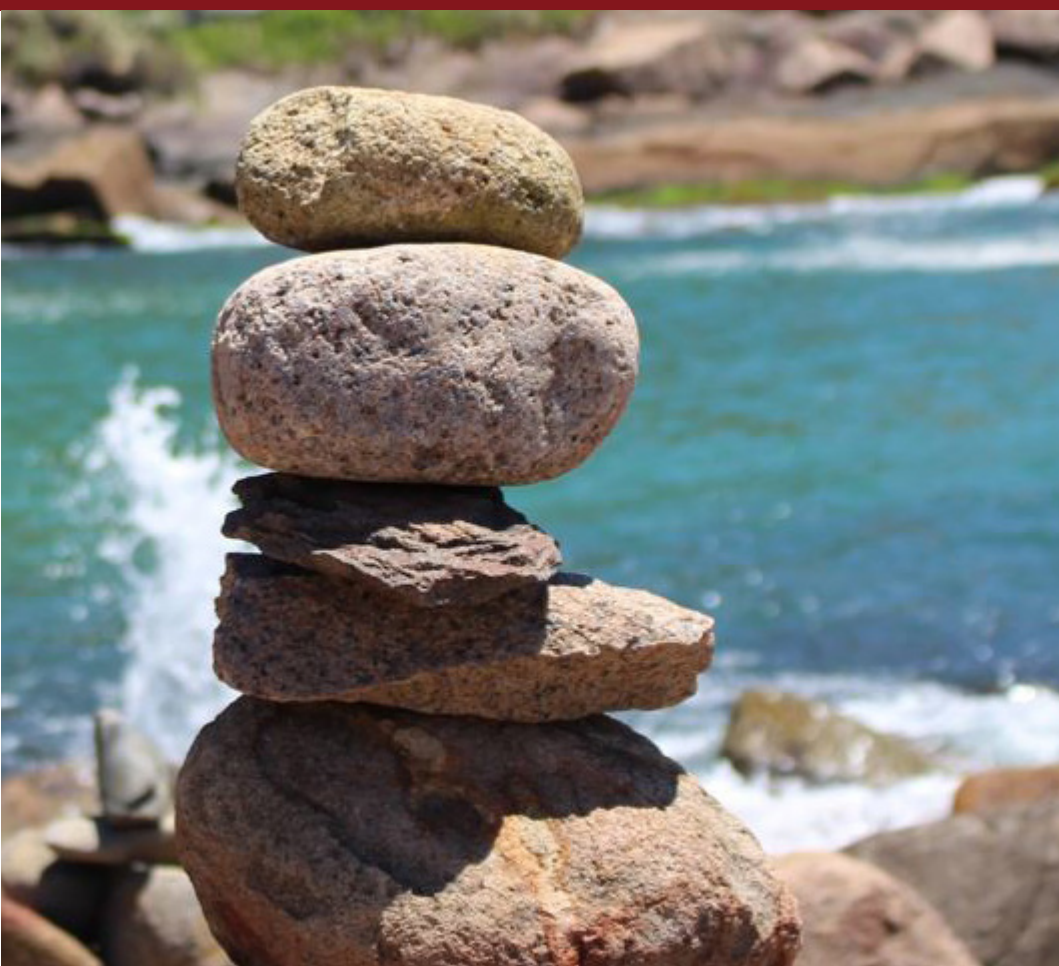
Richardson’s letter cites a study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse showing that employees who tested positive for marijuana had 55% more industrial accidents, 85% more injuries and 75% greater absenteeism compared to those who tested negative.

According to a **review** from the National Academy of Medicine cited in the letter, cannabis increases the risk of schizophrenia and other psychoses, Richardson says.

Richardson also points to the 2015 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Fatality Analysis Reporting System, where 43% of fatally injured drivers had drugs in their system, with 36.5% of the drugs being marijuana in some form. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, of the 49,163 driver deaths on US roadways in 2015, 5,587 deaths, or 11.4%, were due to the driver being “under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medication.”

In 2020, of the 53,890 driver fatalities, 6,246, or 11.6%, were due to drivers driving under the influence, the letter said.





BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would allow substance abuse recovery houses the option of being certified by the state drew a unanimous vote in a House committee hearing. **House Bill 114**, sponsored by Rep. Kerri Evelyn Harris, D-Dover/Magnolia, also would allow state and local government funds to go only to homes that are certified under the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.

Those in the substance abuse recovery business say that they have been shocked that Delaware does not require recovery homes to be certified. It's an issue that's come into focus as opioid addictions worsened under the COVID-19 pandemic and deaths from heroin, fentanyl and other narcotic drugs continue to plague the country.

## BILL SEEKS TO ENSURE RECOVERY HOUSES ARE STATE CERTIFIED

Recovery houses are places where recovering addicts live after leaving their first programs to kick drugs. Many programs require their patients to move into sober living facilities to reduce the stresses that led to their addictions, the availability to drugs and closeness of others who may still do drugs, all to help strengthen their resolve to stay clean. Many in the houses continue to work through addiction programs as they seek healthier lifestyles and slowly take on public jobs before fully moving back into society.

George Meldrum, a former Nemours lobbyist, testified that he has been sober for 30 years and continues to be active in recovery programs. He's met many people who felt like their recovery house experience actually damaged their attempts to recover because they were not run well.

HB 114, Harris's first bill since her election to the House, drew bipartisan support from Tuesday's meeting of the House Health & Human Development Committee. The bill has 12 cosponsors, only one of whom was Republican, Rep. Ruth Briggs King of Georgetown.

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# JUDGE REFUSES TO BLOCK STATE'S ASSAULT RIFLE, MAGAZINE LAWS

BY SAM HAUT

A Delaware sportsmen's group says a federal judge's opinion refusing to OK an injunction to shut down implementation of two new state gun rules contained many incorrect findings and that it will appeal. A post on the Delaware State Sportsmen's Association page also says the group is not surprised a judge appointed by former president Barack Obama would rule in this way.

In the [opinion](#) issued Monday, U.S. Judge Richard Andrews of the District of Delaware denied a preliminary injunction sought by the plaintiffs in the case of Delaware State Sportsmen's Association, Inc. et al. v. Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security et al.

The laws banned the purchase of assault weapons and banned high capacity magazines respectively and were both signed into law by the governor on June 30, 2022,

becoming effective immediately. Both laws will remain in effect while the case makes its way through the court system.

Jeff Hague, president of Sportsmen's Association, the state's National Rifle Association affiliate, said the law that they passed is vague and is vague about which guns are and aren't banned. Hague said he would much prefer the state focus on passing red flag laws, like one he helped to pass, rather than on the type of gun used.

"The whole point is legislators don't have the guts to deal with the person that causes the problem," Hague said. "They ban the object. They say this is an evil object so we're gonna ban it...So to ban a specific firearm does no good. You have to deal with the person that's committing the violent act."

The association had responded to the suit on its Face-

book page earlier this week. "A right delayed is a right denied," the post said.

The organization vowed to continue fighting and asked people to donate to help.

## RIFLE, MAGAZINE PLAINTIFFS

Plaintiffs in the suit include Bridgeville Rifle & Pistol Club, Delaware Rifle and Pistol Club, Delaware Association of Federal Firearms Licensees, Madonna Nedza, Cecil Curtis Clements, James Hosfel Jr., Bruce Smith, Vickie Lynn Prickett and Frank Nedza.

Andrews said the plaintiffs had not shown they suffer irreparable harm due to the two laws. The plaintiffs claim that the laws prevent them from obtaining assault weapons and high-capacity magazines for self-defense purposes and harm their ability to sell assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

Andrews takes issue with the first claim, saying the plaintiffs are able to use other weapons for self defense and pistols are not impacted by the law. They are the quintessential weapon of self defense, Andrews said, citing the Supreme Court case *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen*.

For the second claim, Andrews cites the case *Drummond v. Robinson Township* to show that the Second Amendment doesn't give people an unabridged right to sell guns. The second amendment does not guarantee the right to sell guns, the opinion said.

Attorney General Kathy Jennings said in a press release that the decision acknowledges to role that assault rifles have played in mass shootings, including this week in Nashville, where six adults and three students were killed.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# BILL WILL GIVE ADDICTS NEW NEEDLES WITHOUT TURNING IN OLD

BY SAM HAUT

A bill heard Wednesday in the Senate Health & Social Services committee would alter the state's needle exchange program to allow people to get clean new needles without exchanging them for dirty needles.

**Senate Bill 52**, sponsored by Sen. Marie Pinkney, D-Bear, would change the Sterile Needle and Syringe Exchange Program into the Sterile Needle and Syringe Service Program, allowing people to receive needles on an as needed basis instead of a trade. It seems likely to pass because Democrats have a supermajority in the Senate and the bill's 17 cosponsors are all Democrats. Senate committees do not vote in public and results are not known until they are posted hours later on the state bill tracker.

The topic generated a lot of discussion.

Dr. Lynn Morrison, CEO of Brandywine Counseling & Community Services, said as an expert witness that the move would help reduce the transmission of Hepatitis C and HIV in their communities.

During committee discussion, Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, said he believes the bill might be a step too far and would prefer instead of giving people 10 or 20 needles that it's limited to 10. The program is based on the hope that addicts will come in one day and ask for help instead of needles, he said.

"And when you give 20, you contribute to a likelihood that they're gonna take a longer time to come back," he said. "That's just based on what I've read. The key to this success is the connection that you have."

Morrison responded that it would be more helpful if there isn't a limit on the amount of needles people can receive.

"What we're trying to accomplish is an as-needed basis and if you're capping it at a number, then you're not meeting a need," Morrison said. "You're continuing to put a limitation on someone's capability to get what they need. And the need is not so that we won't see you, it's so that it will last you until we see you again."

The bill's fiscal note estimates it would cost \$100,000 in the 2024 fiscal year, \$103,000 in the 2025 fiscal year and \$106,090 in the 2026 fiscal year. This is based on an estimated 1,150,000 additional needles that must be purchased at a median of nine cents each.

Buckson said he's seen statistics showing that letting people get as many needles as they want will lead to more needles in the community. Morrison said that the research she has seen doesn't show an increase in the amount of needles in a community where programs have allowed people to get needles on an as-needed basis compared to a needle exchange.

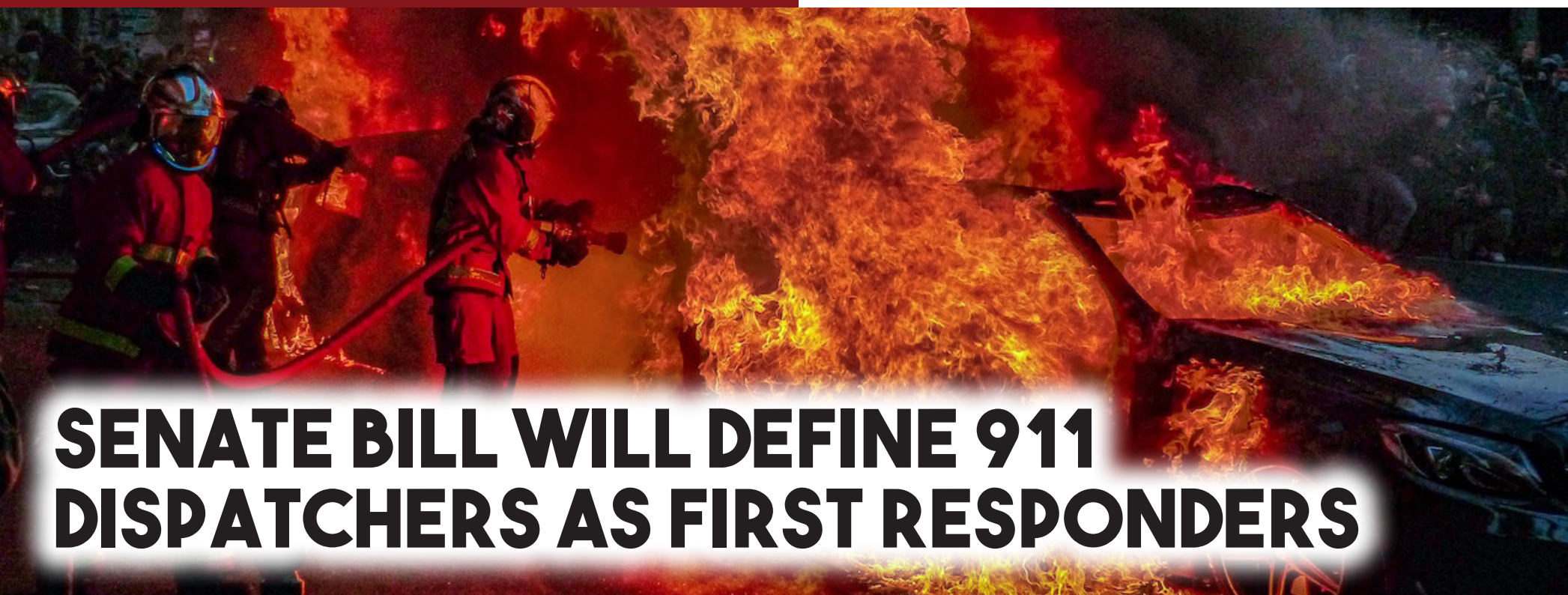
Delaware's needle exchange program was created in 2004 by former Sen. Margaret Rose Henry.

Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, suggested the program could go further, which Morrison said could include safe injection sites, drop boxes for needles and changing the law on having needles. Part of the reason that people don't properly dispose of needles, Morrison said, is because they are worried police might charge them.

Buckson hoped that if the bill makes it to the Senate floor, everyone will be more familiar with some of the research on why these programs don't work.

Several people spoke in favor of the bill, including James Dowling, the administrator for the Delaware Division of Public Health HIV Prevention Program; Tyler Berl, executive director of the Delaware HIV Consortium; and Sarah Stones, the chair of the Delaware Drug Overdose Fatality Review Commission.

Perennial General Assembly public commenter Robert Overmiller said he was against the bill because people can buy needles at a pharmacy.



# SENATE BILL WILL DEFINE 911 DISPATCHERS AS FIRST RESPONDERS

BY BETSY PRICE

A bill that defines 911 dispatchers as first responders drew no opposition Wednesday in the Senate Corrections and Public Safety Committee. The remarkably short **Senate Bill 36**, sponsored by Sen. Spiros Mantzavinos, D-Elsmere, was also the first bill to be heard in the new committee.

It is expected to pass, but the results won't be known until the vote is posted later Wednesday on the state's bill tracker. Senate committees, whose members are fond of saying they support transparency in government, do not vote in public.

The bill will change state code to say add that a 911 dispatcher means "a first responder working in any 911 dispatch center who is responsible for responding to calls for emergency and non-emergency assistance and dispatching law enforcement, fire-fighting, rescue or emergency medical units."

The move appears to bind dispatchers to confidentiality of communications by first responders for critical incident stress management services, as it recognizes their importance as the first contact for callers experiencing an emergency. Committee members hailed the move. Sen. Dave Wilson, R-Milford/Bridgeville, said it was long overdue.

"They're so professional, you know," he said.

Brandy Cahall, a 911 dispatcher for Delaware State Police for 18 years and a representative of Community Workers of American Union, said one reason to see dispatchers as first responders is because of the amount of technology that must be mastered to handle calls.

"It's definitely a job, more of a career than anything," she said.

## DISPATCHERS RESPOND

Saul Polish, who is starting his 29th year as a 911 dis-

patcher with the New Castle County office, said he expected to make a career of the job when he started.

"Looking back today, I never knew what the possibilities of that career was going to be," he told the committee. "It warms my heart to hear all the positive things that are being said today." It also bothered him that it took so long for dispatchers to get the recognition and respect, he said.

Dispatchers started to push the definition adding them to the list of first responders in 2021, he said. Dispatchers are still trying to win that first-responder recognition from federal and international sources, he said.

"We are more than just clerical," he said. The industry does constant training and even offers a 40-hour introductory course so that someone thinking about applying for a job knows exactly what they are getting into.

"So I just want to say that I thank you for this opportunity," he said.

Jeffrey Miller, chief of the New Castle County Emergency Communications Division, also known as 911, noted that state law requires all medical calls to be handled by a nationally accredited and certified 911 center trained in the use of priority dispatch medical protocols. The state's three largest centers are all nationally accredited in the call-taking process for medical, he said. Other centers are working toward that.

Rules consider a taxi cab dispatcher to be in the protected class of employees, he pointed out, "but they do not consider our personnel to be protected class as they are not first responders."





# BILL TO GIVE LOW-WAGE WORKERS LOWER TAXES MOVES ON

BY SAM HAUT

A House finance committee released a bill that ultimately will allow low-wage earners to keep more of their money, a move that will cost the state 10s of millions every year. [House Bill 89](#), sponsored by Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, would do three things:

- Increase the amount of refunded tax from 4.5% to 7.5% for low-wage earners who meet the federal Earned Income Tax Credit requirements.
- Raise the income floor for those who qualify for that tax credit to \$11,828 for individuals and \$20,349 for filing jointly from \$9,378 and \$15,449, respectively.
- Increase the state's standard deduction amount from \$3,250 for individuals and \$6,500 for people filing jointly to \$5,700 for individuals and \$11,400 for people filing jointly, starting with the 2024 tax season. That will allow more people to file taxes using the standard deduction rather than the more complicated itemized tax form.

The move suits both the progressive Democrat push to help lower-wage workers in a variety of ways and the Republican determination to lower taxes on workers, which consistently fails in the Democrat-majority General Assembly.

Secretary of Finance Richard Geisenberger said in response that his department has gone live with an integrated personal income tax system, so there won't be issues with House Bill 89.

In the fiscal note for the bill, the Controller General's office predicts that it will cost the state \$24.9 million in lost revenue in the 2024 fiscal year, \$55.7 million in the 2025 fiscal year, and \$57.2 million in the 2026 fiscal year.

Rep. Jeffrey Spiegelman, R-Townsend/Hartley, said that House Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, couldn't attend the meeting but asked Spiegelman to point out that the bill is similar to bills Republicans have been proposing in recent years that didn't get bipartisan

support. Ramone would have liked those bills to receive bipartisan support, Spiegelman said. Rep. Sherry Dorsey Walker, D-Wilmington, said that Spiegelman could sign on as a bill backer if he wanted to, and Spiegelman said he might.

The bill already has 11 additional sponsors and co-sponsors, including 10 Democrats and one Republican, Senate Minority Leader Gerald Hocker. The bill has been assigned to the House appropriations Committee.

Rep. Krista Griffith, D-Greenville, pointed out in the House Revenue and Finance Committee Tuesday that previous tax bills have had issues with getting technology working in a timely manner. Geisenberger said in response that his department has gone live with an integrated personal income tax system, so there won't be issues with House Bill 89.

Also Tuesday, [House Bill 67](#) was tabled. It would exempt someone from paying a realty transfer tax if they already had paid the tax on another property deal within the past year. The bill was sponsored by Rep. Bryan Shupe, R-Milford. Shupe is the CEO of Delaware LIVE.

Rebecca Goldsmith, deputy Secretary of Finance, opposed the bill, saying a decrease in revenue generated by this tax without another offset would create a "long-term revenue decline".

The realty transfer tax generated around \$304 million for the general fund last year, and is expected to generate \$240 million this year. The decline reflects a slowdown in the housing and commercial property market after several years of record sales. The bill had five cosponsors, all of whom are Republicans.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

# CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT BILL SENT TO HOUSE FLOOR

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would crack down on the spike in catalytic converter thefts breezed through the House Public Safety & Homeland Security Committee Tuesday afternoon.

**House Bill 78**, sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, imposes rules on scrapyards' purchase or sale of catalytic converters, part of a vehicle's exhaust pipe.

"Law Enforcement talked about the extreme rise in catalytic converters and I think we all know it's an issue," Morrison said. "We see it on Nextdoor, we see it on Facebook, we read about it in newspapers."

Delaware is one of the top 10 states with the highest per capita theft rate for catalytic converters, he said. The reason thieves steal this piece in particular is because it contains three precious metals that are extremely valuable, said Eric De Campos, the director of government affairs at the [National Insurance Crime Bureau](#), to the committee. Those metals are platinum, palladium and

rhodium. An ounce of any of those three can be worth more than \$1,000.

"Most catalytic converters cost between \$800 and \$1,200," Morrison said, "but that doesn't necessarily include the costs for fixing the vehicle, and that can run you anywhere between \$1,000 to \$3,000, so it's pretty serious stuff."

If someone steals a catalytic converter and brings it to a junkyard, there aren't any substantial regulations in place that identify the seller or buyer, nor is there anything that proves the piece isn't stolen, Morrison said.

Under the bill, anyone who buys a catalytic converter from someone else must collect and record the following information:

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# COURTS TO HOLD FIRST SAFE SURRENDER DAY IN OVER A DECADE

BY SAM HAUT

Delaware courts will host a special day in May to let those with warrants or other charges have their cases heard quickly and clear their records. Safe Surrender Day will take place May 12 from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in Wilmington.

It's being billed as a chance for those with warrants or other charges to have their case heard in a more favorable environment, not as a way out of the charges.

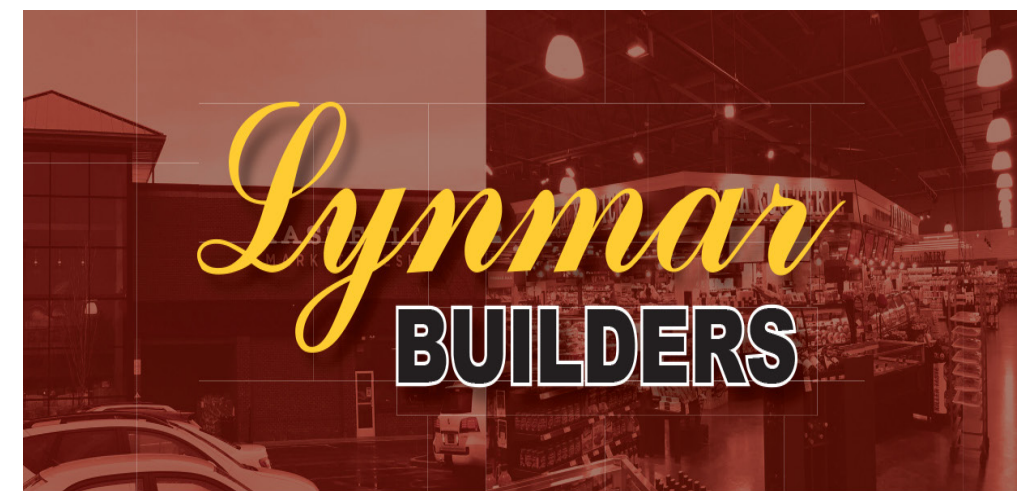
The last time an **event** like this was held in Delaware was in 2009 when 1,073 people surrendered for various charges, including sex offenses, escaping the police, robbery, weapon charges, drug charges and felony assaults. A total of 4,131 warrants were cleared at that event.

Roger Roof, management analyst at the Delaware Justice of the Peace Court, said that they tried to do this

event in 2017 but didn't have enough funding. They planned to try again in 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic squashed it. Roof said the 2009 event lasted three days, but the costs associated with doing it will limit it to one day and the courts expect 600 and 700 people to attend.

Over a dozen judges and courtrooms will be set aside to help clear people charged with any failure to appear, failure to pay or outstanding warrants. Those who have previously failed to appear may have a new court date scheduled and those with violent felony charges may be arrested, though they will all be handled on a case-by-case basis.

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# CAESAR RODNEY WANTS TO RAISE SCHOOL TAXES 27.7%

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Caesar Rodney School District wants to raise district school taxes by 27.7% over three years to help pay for utilities, maintenance, building budgets and staffing. It's taking that request to voters in a referendum April 22. Caesar Rodney's last referendum was in 2015.

The average taxpayer, who owns a house with an assessed value of \$40,300, would have their taxes increased by \$211.58 in 2024 and another \$36.11 in 2025 and 2026, said Caesar Rodney Superintendent Christine Alois.

Alois said the district's expenses are outpacing its revenue and it must raise taxes to get an \$11,037,200 state Certificate of Necessity grant. Under the terms of that grant, the district has to raise \$4,508,152 for a total of \$15,545,352.

The grant will fund a heating, ventilation and air conditioning system for Magnolia Middle School; oper-

ating costs for David E. Robinson Elementary School and Magnolia Middle School, both of which opened in 2022 without operating budgets; and general operating expenditures related to district growth. The grant also requires voters to approve the grant's expenditures.

If the public voted against the tax increases, Caesar Rodney would not receive any of the \$11,037,200 state share. Because the ballot will have three questions on it, one related to each of the areas to be funded, it's possible voters could approve one or two projects, without approving the third.

Voting for the heating, ventilation and air conditioning project will not increase taxes at all, Alois said.

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# Sports

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BY NICK HALLIDAY

After adding its first player to the 100-hit club since 2013 a week ago Delaware Technical Community College adds to more. Earlier this month Macey Myers eclipsed the 100-hit mark making her the first player since 2013 adding her name in the history books. Since then two more players have added their name to the 100-hit club Matt Rodriguez from the baseball team and Logan Walls from the softball team.

Rodriguez, a graduate of Delmar High School, reached a total of 101 for his Delaware Tech career in the first game of a doubleheader against Allegany College of Maryland. Rodriguez got four hits in the game.

From year one to year two, Rodriguez became the team's dominant hitter. He was honorable mention for the all-region team the first year and first team all-re-

# DELTECH ADDS TWO MORE TO THE 100-HIT CLUB

gion his second year. Rodriguez was also named the team's most valuable player (MVP) after last season.

Logan Walls, also a graduate of Delmar High School, eclipsed 100 hits, she was also named Eastern Pennsylvania Athletic Conference (EPAC) Player of the Week for batting 11-for-14 with eight RBI and three triples in four Delaware Tech wins.

During her time at Delaware Tech, she was a two-time all-region player and a member of the back-to-back region and district champion softball teams.



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## DELAWARE THUNDER DENIED EXTENSION BY STATE FAIR

BY NICK ALESSANDRINI

The Delaware Thunder professional ice hockey team has been denied a contract extension to continue playing at the Centre Ice Rink located on the Delaware State Fairgrounds. The Thunder have played their home games since their inception in 2019.

After three seasons of playing their home games they are being denied a contract extension to keep playing their home games at the Centre. During the Thunder press conference yesterday, CEO Charlie Pens Sr. was asked why and he said, “Well, to be honest, one man. One person is preventing it at the Delaware State Fair and I don’t think it’s fair that one man can affect an entire state or an entire community and an entire region.”

Delaware Thunder is the first professional team to ever be located in Harrington. They are now part of that community. They have built a great fan base as well as

great partnerships with surrounding businesses, groups and churches in their community as well as surrounding communities. Pens Sr. said, “We’ve purchased real estate in the area, we have housing rentals. This isn’t a fly-by-night organization, we’re in the community and we are a part of the community, so my intentions were not to go anywhere.”

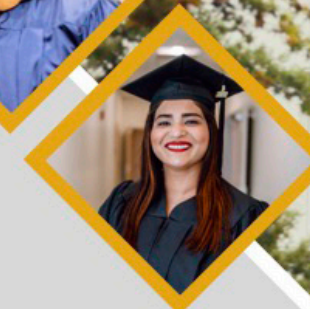
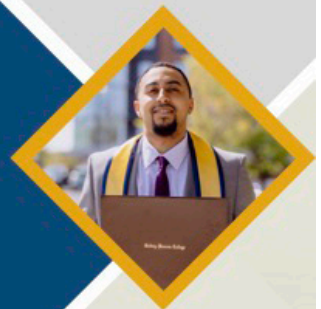
The Thunder doesn’t just thrive from the community, they also give back to the community. They give back by supporting the USO since Delaware is a big military state. They also support Harrington Fire Company, Harrington Police and Delaware Troopers association. They give back to multiple other charities as in ALS Greater Philadelphia, Delaware Autism and many different cancer charities throughout the seasons. They give back to the local hockey leagues, their players read to kids in elementary schools. During the press conference Pens Sr. stated, “If the Delaware State Fair is about community then what is this all about then?”

It seems there have been some contract disputes between the two organizations that have led to this contract dispute. We do not want to speculate on those terms, but during the press conference CEO Pens did talk about a few of them. If you want to hear them, [HERE](#) is the link to the live streamed press conference.

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