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## YEAR IN REVIEW

December 31, 2023

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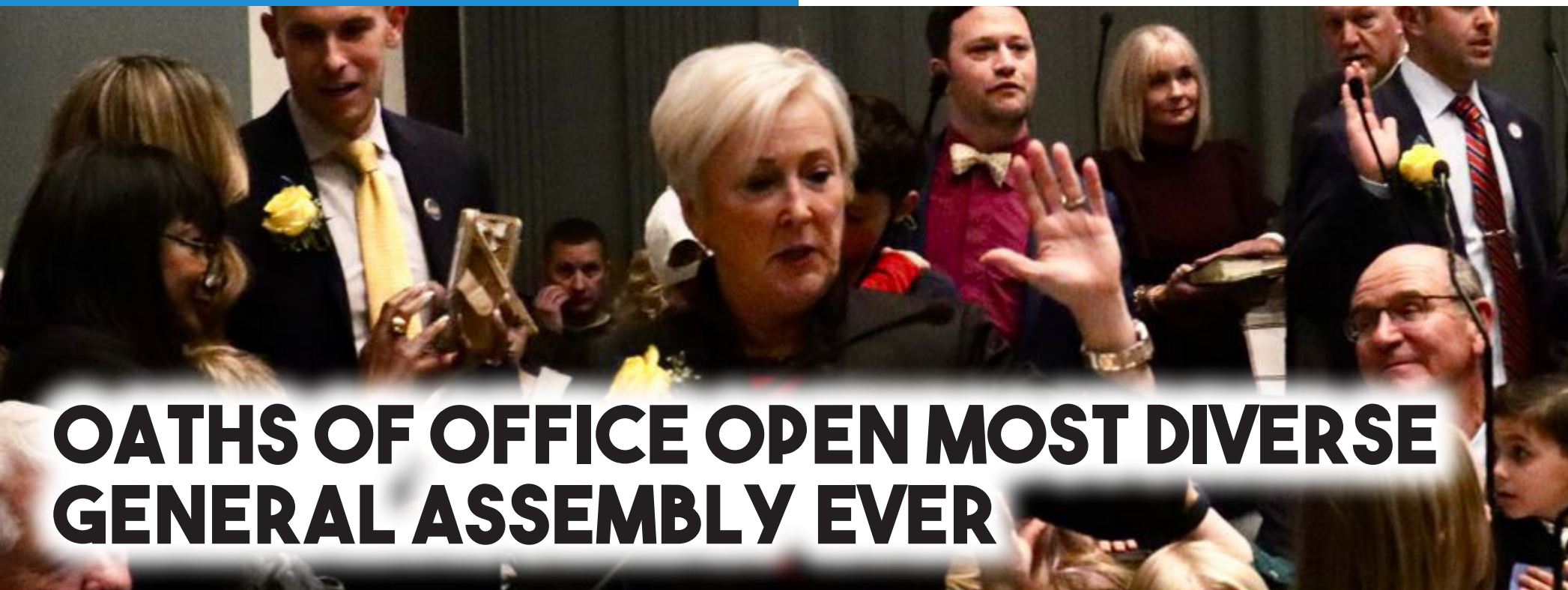
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# Headlines

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# OATHS OF OFFICE OPEN MOST DIVERSE GENERAL ASSEMBLY EVER

BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware’s **152nd General Assembly** officially began Tuesday, as Delaware’s 62 representatives and senators were sworn into office in what is the most diverse legislature yet.

“We’re finally looking like Delaware’s population,” said Rep. DeShanna Neal, D-Wilmington. The first nonbinary and first Buddhist to serve in Delaware’s legislature, they are starting their first year in office.

“One of the most amazing parts of being elected for the first time was being at the polls and seeing little Black and Brown girls coming up to me knowing this is something they can achieve too,” they said.

In the first meeting of the House, several representatives from both sides of the aisle talked about unity, community and leadership in regard to their duty in the state legislature.

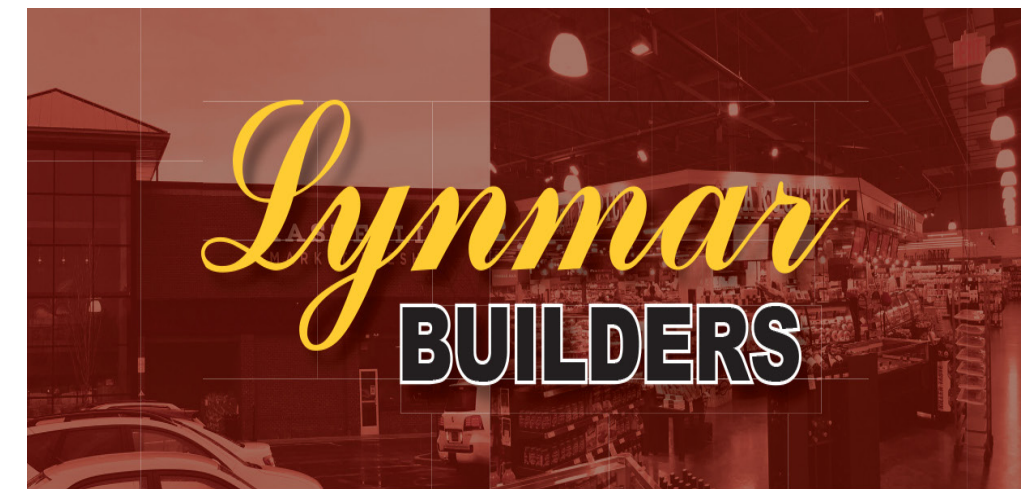
“It’s a pleasure to be working in one of the most inclusive, not just diverse but inclusive, bodies that we’ve had in the state of Delaware and perhaps even in the nation,” said Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, to the 40 other representatives and their respective family and friends in the House Chamber.

“What we’re doing here is the work of the people,” she continued. “It’s not the legislation we pass or the legislation we stop, it’s what we do each and every day in our district for that person that has the smallest need or the biggest concern.”

## PLANS FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, pointed out that just two years ago, the General Assembly had zero legislators who were in the LGBTQ+ community in its 244-year history.

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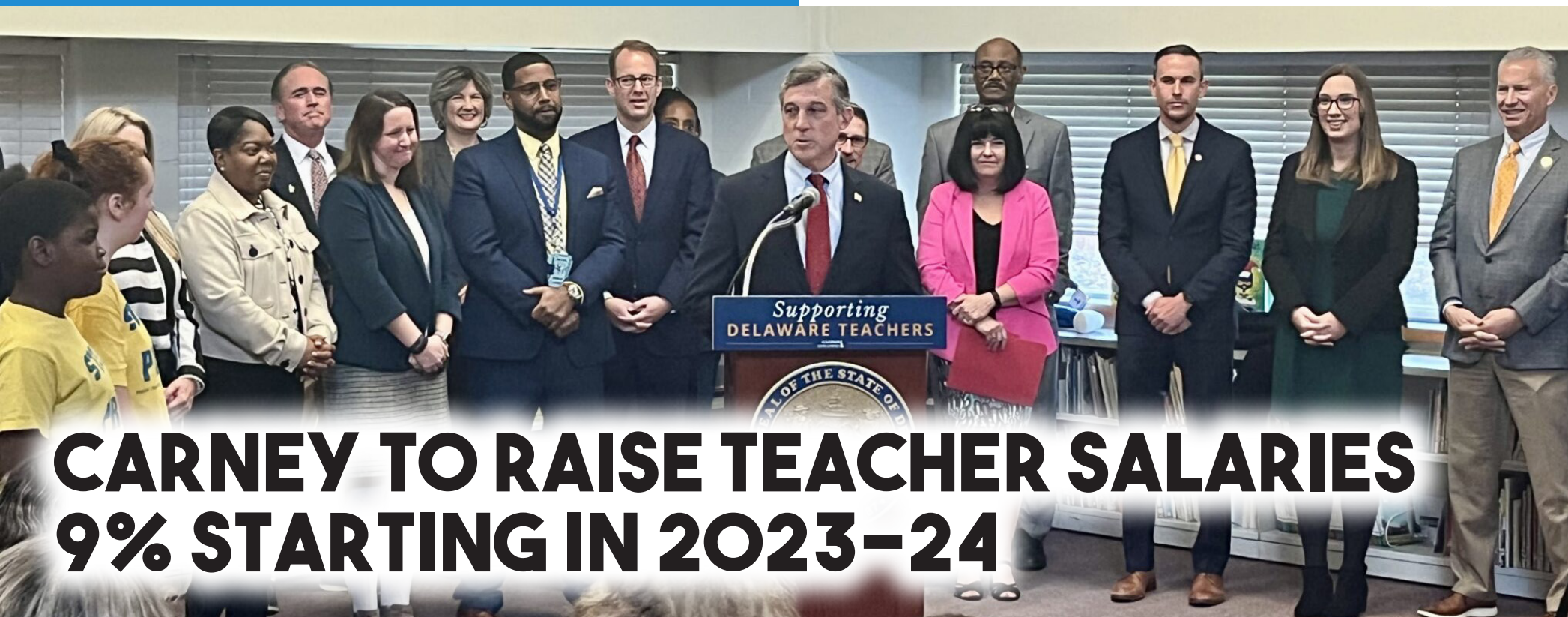
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# CARNEY TO RAISE TEACHER SALARIES 9% STARTING IN 2023-24

BY JAREK RUTZ

Classroom teachers in Delaware’s public schools will receive a 9% increase in their salary next school year. Others who work in education will receive a 3% raise.

Those announcements came Tuesday from Education Secretary Mark Holodick during an event in which Gov. John Carney detailed the money he was investing in public education in next year’s budget, which starts July 1.

“We can’t afford to wait until November,” Holodick said. That’s when salary recommendations are due from the Public Education Compensation Committee, a group created to review and develops suggestions about enhancing Delaware’s educator compensation structure.

Its goal is to attract teachers to work in Delaware—and to keep them in the state—by paying them salaries that are competitive to neighboring states. Most notably, Maryland passed a law that would give teachers a

starting salary of \$60,000, which is nearly \$20,000 more than the base pay for Delaware teachers.

“If we want to recruit and retain quality educators, we need to provide them with a respectable salary at the beginning of their career,” said Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton, chair of the House Education Committee. “Educating our children is one of the most important jobs one could ever hold, and we should pay the educators a salary showing that we believe that it’s the most important job,” she said.

Stephanie Ingram, president of the **Delaware State Education Association**, the state teachers union, was happy with the investment. The union supports all public school employees, whose salary is what the Public Education Compensation Committee is reviewing.

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# LONGHURST STARTS HOUSE DAY TWO BY APOLOGIZING TO MINOR-BROWN

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware House of Representatives majority leader started the second day of the 152nd General Assembly Wednesday by apologizing to the new minority leader for the way she phrased a description of her. On Tuesday, Rep. Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, had introduced Rep. Melissa Minor-Brown as “the first colored woman in leadership in the House of Representatives.” They hugged after Longhurst singled out Minor-Brown. The arcane phrasing drew criticism, Longhurst said Wednesday.

“Unfortunately, I horribly misspoke when trying to say women of color,” Longhurst said. “I know how hurtful that word is, that it’s so closely associated with one of the bleaker times in our history, Jim Crow. It’s a derogatory term, and the exact opposite of what I was trying to express to my friend. I’m really sorry.”

Longhurst said she intended to honor Minor-Brown. “It was a day of celebration for all new members being sworn in for the first time and especially for my good friend, Rep. Melissa Minor-Brown, who made history by becoming the first Black person to hold a leadership position in the house,” Longhurst said Wednesday. “I wanted to celebrate Mimi and her accomplishments, which is so important not just for her, but for every young person who aspires to do great things.”

Longhurst said she had spoken to Minor-Brown and others, but wanted to publicly apologize to the House members and the guests they brought with them Monday for the annual swearing in.

“So many people came to Dover yesterday to celebrate their loved ones accomplishments,” Longhurst said. “And I’m sorry my mistake distracted from that. I am truly

proud of this House and its diversity, and I’m honored to lead it. That includes being called to account when I messed up, whether it’s intentionally or not.”

Minor-Brown, who sits next to Longhurst on the House floor, thanked her.

“I do understand why people were upset by Valerie’s word choice, particularly in the political climate that we’re in today,” Minor-Brown said. “The difference here in Delaware is that we do like to extend grace to our colleagues when they make a mistake.”

Minor-Brown told Longhurst that she knew Longhurst’s intent “was not negative or coming from a bad place.”

“I know who you are,” she told Longhurst. “Even though the word choice was not the greatest, it’s important that we extend grace when we all make mistakes, and I’ve seen that happen out here on this floor.

“We as a caucus are ready to move forward as we continue to become more diverse.”

Minor-Brown ended by saying, “My hope is that we all continue to evolve our understanding that we will make mistakes, but it’s important that we educate ourselves and we educate our colleagues and that we be patient and we are providing some understanding when we interact with each other.”

See Longhurst’s apology in this House [video](#).





# EASTSIDE BREAKS GROUND ON \$25 MILLION COMMUNITY STEM HUB

BY JAREK RUTZ

EastSide Charter’s new \$25 million STEM hub boils down to one word: accessibility, said Chief Executive Officer Aaron Bass. That hub was one step closer to reality Wednesday after the charter school held a groundbreaking ceremony for the 24,000-square-foot building scheduled to open in fall 2024.

“The number one industry in Delaware is STEM,” Bass said, but many students don’t know where to start if they want to be an engineer, chemist or doctor. The hub is designed to help make those connections, in class and out.

Early last year, Chemours became EastSide’s lead donor in the venture, giving \$4 million to the project. Since then, **Barclays US Consumer Bank** donated \$1 million, and EastSide received \$3 million in federal funding and \$5 million in state funds to build the hub.

The donations go to **First Community Foundation**, the group that funds EastSide Charter.

The hub will benefit far more than just the EastSide community, Bass said.

“You have the same access to the hub as you would public libraries because it is for all children and adults in Delaware,” he said. “We have people at Chemours already committed to leading ongoing classes to adults and to young people to enter into STEM careers.”

Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall-Long said during the ceremony that while 52% of Delaware’s workforce are women, only 29% of them are in a STEM-related job. Black workers make up less than 7% of the STEM workforce, and Hispanics make up less than 1% she said.

“It starts when we’re young and with the exposure that we have today, change is common,” she said. “Today, opportunity is coming for the young men and the women in this community.”

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# LEGISLATORS CALL FOR MEANS TESTING FOR PROPERTY TAX CREDITS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Calls to consider means testing before granting veteran and senior housing tax breaks shocked a legislative committee last month. Delaware's secretary of finance doesn't think an income-based means test for property tax breaks is likely. Even so, Rick Geisenberger did say that a means test based on property values not only could happen, but should.

"Seniors get a lot of benefits under the Delaware income tax law," Geisenberger said. "They get to take an extra personal credit, which is worth an extra \$110 deduction in income taxes. They don't get taxed on their Social Security. They get to deduct up to \$12,500 of their pension when they turn 60. And when you get to the age of 65, you get an extra standard deduction worth \$2,500."

## WHAT IS A MEANS TEST?

Means tests usually involve setting limits on whether someone is granted a tax break by looking at income, savings and other factors. Think food stamps, which is

now called SNAP or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. In Delaware, a single person can receive a maximum of \$281 a month. That number is \$516 for a household of two, \$740 for a household of three, \$939 for a household of four, and the number continues to rise with each additional person. To be eligible for food stamps, an individual or household must make below a certain income.

In a House Education Committee meeting last month, several representatives brought up the idea of means testing for the 100% disabled veteran tax break. It's an uncapped credit for disabled veterans who live in Delaware for three years. The discussion was prompted by [House Bill 30](#), which would remove the three-year residency requirement.

Expanding the tax credit would cost the state between \$248,887 and \$518,514 in Fiscal Year 2024, according to the bill's fiscal note. It would rise about \$40,000 to

\$70,000 in coming years, the fiscal note said.

The average veteran tax credit is \$1,500, with a range from \$633 to \$4,632. Now, 710 disabled veterans benefit from the credit. With more than three months left to apply for the break, the Finance Department expects a total of 923 beneficiaries this year.

"I understand that it's not always easy to means test, because then you're also talking about hiring staff to process everything," said Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, said at the meeting. "I do hope that we will continue to have conversations about the best way to give relief to people who need it and give the maximum amount to those who need it."

He referenced his 13 years working in Medicaid and other health programs, and said he has concerns about there not being a means test for the senior school property tax credit. Delaware currently caps this credit at \$500 for seniors 65 years and older who have lived in the state for at least 10 years.

Rep. Sean Lynn, D-Dover, called for a means test during January's meeting as well to make sure those who don't need the tax cuts are not taking advantage of the state. Although property taxes help fund schools, districts don't lose a penny when seniors get a tax break.

"Whatever the lost revenue is to the school districts is then 100% reimbursed by the state," Geisenberger said.

Delaware was on the hook for \$28,789,300 for the senior tax credit and \$2.5 million for the disabled veterans one in Fiscal Year 2023, according to the budget bill.

Property taxes are a local, county-designated tax and counties do not have individual income tax information at their disposal, Geisenberger pointed out.

[READ MORE HERE](#)





# CHILD CARE REPORT: FIRST STATE LACKS AFFORDABLE OPTIONS

BY JAREK RUTZ

A new report from [Rodel](#) shows that First State families do not have adequate access to affordable child care.

A coalition of advocacy groups—including Rodel, the [Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children](#), [Delaware Readiness Teams](#) and [First State Pre-K](#)—conducted a survey with hundreds of Delaware families to gauge their feelings about child care services.

Caregivers of children five years and younger shared common complaints about long waitlists, high prices and a lack of options around them. According to the survey, 81% of caregivers said the expenses of child care hold their family back from improving their situation.

The report found that 71% of caregivers looked at multiple places to send their children to, but 37% of them were waitlisted by at least two centers; 21% were flat-out rejected services.

The numbers are worse for parents in Kent or Sussex counties. Seventy-three percent of those people were waitlisted by at least two centers, while only 45% of New Castle County caregivers were.

“Kent and Sussex just don’t have options,” said Toni Dickerson, an administrator at [Sussex Preschools](#) and the chair of the [Child Care Association of Sussex County](#). She helped Rodel with the report. Rodel is a nonprofit focused on transforming public education in Delaware.

“For my centers, specifically, we have five locations and three of those locations are the only center-based options within the zip code,” she said. The Seaford School District only has one full-time child care center in the district, she said.

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# HEATED DEBATE ENDS IN VOTE TO RAISE TEACHER PAY OVER FOUR YEARS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Defying the demands of the state teachers union, a committee formed to make recommendations on educator pay voted Monday to bring teacher's starting salary to \$60,000 over four years rather than three. The four-year plan will consist of a 2% salary increase and a flat dollar increase of \$1,875 to the base salary for teachers, nurses and administrators each year until it reaches \$60,000 in the 2027-2028 school year.

The argument over the three- or four-year spread grew heated between Cerron Cade, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, and the Delaware State Education Association, which represents teachers and other educators. The union wants raises faster, saying the state needs them to compete with rising salaries in other states. OMB wants to spread raises out to be more accommodating to the state budget.

"This is kind of embarrassing at this point, and I'm not really sure where we're supposed to go from here," said Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek during the Public Education Compensation Committee's meeting. "I'm just going to go not voting because I don't even feel com-

fortable at this point that we're gonna get anywhere."

His comment came after Stephanie Ingram, president of the DSEA, insisted that the committee needs to bump starting salaries to \$60,000 through a three-year timeline. Maryland recently passed legislation that would bring the starting salaries of teachers to \$60,000 by July 1, 2026. Ingram has pushed for months for the committee to recommend the three-year plan in order to keep the state on pace with Maryland's law.

"Our recommendation needs to be bold. Our recommendation needs to be one that ensures that we keep pace within our region," Ingram said.

The committee needs to make a decision to put its students and educators first, she said, or the state is going to find itself again in a position where it can't compete with surrounding states.

"We need to commit to our students' future and ensure that all of Delaware's classrooms are as fully staffed and up and running as soon as we possibly can," Ingram said.

She and Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, voted against the four-year plan.

"This committee's charge is to make a recommendation that we think will make our schools attractive to educators...since there's a shortage of teachers," Sturgeon said. "It is not to figure out how to pay for it. That is the job of the JFC [Joint Finance Committee]."

Phasing it in over four years means Delaware will continue to languish in hiring and retention, which ultimately hurts students, she said.

Committee member Cade, who is the director of the Office of Management and Budget, adamantly disagreed.

"It's hard for me to make a recommendation without factoring in whether or not it is a realistic recommendation that can be achieved," Cade said.

"If that were the case then there would be no reason to have any years on it because it would be somebody else's job to figure out how to fund it," he said. "So why even have any years phased in? Why not just do it all year one?"

The committee needs to attach some timeline to the plan because it's not realistic without one, Cade said.

"I don't necessarily agree with the idea that it's not our responsibility to factor that into our decision making," he said.

Cade also pointed out that even though the bottom line for the three-year plan and four-year plan is only a difference of \$125,000, adopting the three-year plan would cost the state around \$11 million more each fiscal year.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

# BILL WOULD REMOVE CONFESSION PRIVILEGES FOR CHILD ABUSE

BY SAM HAUT

A new bill would remove the privileged secrecy that priests have in sacramental confession in cases related to child abuse or neglect. In response, the Diocese of Wilmington put out a statement that calls the idea “non-negotiable.”

**House Bill 74** is sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, with 10 other Democrats and Republican Rep. Dave Wilson, R-Seafood, listed as additional sponsors and co-sponsors.

“The sacrament of confession and its seal of confession is a fundamental aspect of the church’s sacramental theology and practice,” the diocese said. “It is non-negotiable.”

“No Catholic priest or bishop would ever break the seal of confession under any circumstances. To do so would incur an automatic excommunication that could

only be pardoned by the pope himself. It would be a clear violation of the First Amendment for the government to interfere in this most sacred and ancient practice of our faith.

“While we support initiatives to make Delaware a safer place for minors and vulnerable adults, HB 74 would not contribute to such efforts in any meaningful way. Priests are already mandatory reporters under Delaware’s child abuse reporting law in all circumstances other than the sacrament of confession. Additionally, the Diocese of Wilmington’s own internal policies require all clergy to report suspected incidents of child abuse to civil authorities.”

Bob Krebs, communications director for the diocese, said that they do have a lobbyist in the legislature, but haven’t decided what they plan on doing to oppose the bill.

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“There’s nothing that’s off the table,” he said. “We’re exploring all of our options now, but yeah it’s definitely something that’s very serious. We’ve already heard from a number of Catholics in the diocese about their disappointment that this is being proposed. We’re definitely going to be doing our best to make sure that the rights of the Catholics in Delaware are not cast aside in this manner.”

**Vermont** and **Utah** have both introduced bills that would remove the exemption for sacraments. Several states, including North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas and West Virginia, have passed legislation that doesn’t exempt sacraments from child abuse cases.

Since 1987, 190 similar bills have died in 33 state legislatures, according to the [Associated Press](#).

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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](#)



# SHE WANTED TO HELP. NOW WINGMOM SERVES 5,000 CLIENTS

BY BETSY PRICE

After Kate Maxwell's firefighter fiancé died in the 2016 Canby Park fire, she crawled into a tunnel of grief and substance abuse. Nine months later, when she got sober with the help of her parents, she was overwhelmed with the amount of love and support she had been shown during that time.

Her best friend, Meg Hurst, and others came to check on her, cooked for her and her kids, cleaned the house and did a number of chores and errands on her behalf while Maxwell sat on the sofa "comatose with grief" after the death of Capt. Chris Leach.

"The community totally surrounded me and showed me so much love and support," Maxwell said. "When I kind of got back on my feet my thought process was 'I've got to find a way to give back.'"

The result was Wingmom, a company that offers all kinds of services including giving kids rides, doing laundry, cleaning, organizing, senior care and even cooking a dish for an overwhelmed mom to take to a party.

The six-year-old company had total sales of \$1.1 million in 2022, all while employing an army of moms who are able to work as much or as little as they want for wages that start at \$19 an hour.

"We have this amazing byproduct that I never thought about in that we're taking women that wouldn't traditionally be employable because they are stay at home

moms or they are trying to support their family through a second job and we are giving them jobs because of our flexibility," Maxwell said.

Wingmom has franchises in Middletown, serving all the way to Dover; southern Pennsylvania; Bucks County, PA; Catskills, NY; and, soon, Washington Township, NJ.

In total, the franchises serve more than 5,000 customers with 250 Wingmoms—and as of 2020 some Wingdads. The original north Delaware franchise alone has 125 Wingmoms and Wingdads on their payrolls.

Maxwell said she never expected the growth that the company has seen.

"I thought that Wingmom was just going to be a way to make some extra cash while helping moms with their day-to-day while I figured out my next move," Maxwell said. "And it ended up becoming this large company."

The company has a lot of vocal fans praising it on social media. Sarah Goldfarb Weeden hires Wingmom to clean her house and has found Vickey Smith, who runs Wingmom's home management department, to be remarkably more reliable than other cleaning companies.

But Goldfarb Weeden's favorite Wingmom story took place on her first day back at work after taking leave when her youngest daughter needed major surgery at CHOP in Philly.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# MARIJUANA LEGAL IN DELAWARE SUNDAY; CARNEY WON'T SIGN, VETO

BY BETSY PRICE

Gov. John Carney said Friday that even though he disagrees with legalizing marijuana and creating a regulated and taxed industry, he will allow the two bills that do that to become law without his signature.

“I want to be clear that my views on this issue have not changed,” he said in a Friday afternoon press release. “I understand there are those who share my views who will be disappointed in my decision not to veto this legislation.

“I came to this decision because I believe we’ve spent far too much time focused on this issue, when Delawareans face more serious and pressing concerns every day. It’s time to move on.”

**House Bill 1**, which decriminalizes marijuana possession for personal use, will become law at the end of Saturday night. It takes effect Sunday, April 23.

**House Bill 2**, which creates a taxable, regulated industry for the growing and selling of marijuana, will become law at the end of Wednesday night. It takes effect Thursday, April 27, but it’s like to be months to a year before the regulations are put in place that allow the industry to take root.

Carney made his announcement one day too late for marijuana advocates to celebrate when they light up on April 20, also referred to as 4/20. That day has become a kind of holiday for those who want weed legalized across the country.

“As I’ve consistently said, I believe the legalization of recreational marijuana is not a step forward,” Carney said in his press release. “I support both medical marijuana and Delaware’s decriminalization law because no one should go to jail for possessing a personal use quan-

tity of marijuana. And today, they do not.”

Rep. Ed Osienski, D-Newark, has repeatedly introduced versions of the bill to legalize marijuana use. The one that passed last year was vetoed by Carney and could not be overcome by the state House.

When he reintroduced the bills this year, Osienski said he thought there was a chance that he would have better luck in the governor’s office.

The governor’s office suggested changes on the industry bill, which passed in an amendment.

And earlier this week, Carney told a town hall meeting that he thought the state had more pressing problems, including lost learning because of COVID-19 and the opioid epidemic, and had spent too much time focusing on marijuana.

“After five years of countless meetings, debates, negotiations and conversations,” Osienski said, “I’m grateful we have reached the point where Delaware has joined a growing number of states that have legalized and regulated adult recreational marijuana for personal use. We know that more than 60% of Delawareans support the legalization of marijuana for adult recreational use, and more than two-thirds of the General Assembly agreed.”

He said he understood the governor’s personal opposition to legalization.

“So I especially appreciate him listening to the thousands of residents who support this effort and allowing it to become law,” Osienski said. “I am committed to working with the administration to ensure that the effort to establish the regulatory process goes as smoothly as possible.”

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# FIRST NEW WILMINGTON SCHOOL IN 50 YEARS TOPPED OFF WITH JOY

BY JAREK RUTZ

Dozens of Wilmington elementary school students chanted “raise it up” and a drum team played while the ceremonial last beam on the first new city school in 50 years was lifted into place by a construction crane.

The new \$84 million **Bancroft School** in **Christina School District**, which will span several blocks in Wilmington, is expected to open for students by fall 2024. The topping off ceremony was the centerpiece of a joyous scene that resembled a festival with music, tents and party food. It seemed to serve as a proof of hope for

a group that’s been largely overlooked by the state for half a century.

About 200 children, teachers, construction workers and government officials gathered Thursday morning on the 7th and Lombard Streets construction grounds. The building will be two floors and serve about 600 students. Most of the staff will transfer to the new building in what George Wicks, supervisor of facilities and planning for the Christina School District, called a “pretty smooth and seamless transition.”

A new name might also be in store, as Gov. John Carney suggested naming the new building the Maurice Pritchett School, after the principal of the Bancroft School from 1975 to 2005. He died in April.

“We’re honored to have the Pritchett family sitting here up front because Maurice was the long-term principal,” said Carney. “He was a symbol of all the educators who poured their heart and soul into this building and the children who attended there.”

“Of all the leaders who’ve worked to improve the lives of the children on the East Side...Mr. Pritchett was on top of that list,” said Dan Shelton, Christina’s superintendent.

Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki announced 7th Street will be renamed Maurice Pritchett Way to honor the former principal.

The old school, which serves grades one through eight, was built in the 1970s, the decade desegregation efforts began to move city students into the suburbs and vice versa. The new Bancroft School campus will be bounded by East 6th and East 8th Streets, and between Lombard and Spruce Streets. Every penny that went into the new building was funded by the state.

“We are so excited about the future of our students,” said Keeley Powell, longtime president of Christina’s school board, “as they learn and grow in this amazing, brand new and state-of-the-art educational space, which is what all of our students deserve.”

To pay homage to the old school’s library, there will be a large display at the entrance of the new auditorium with memorable tokens of the original building.

DELAWARE  
LIVE



## JULIANNE MURRAY ELECTED REPUBLICAN PARTY CHAIR

BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware Republican Party's convention started off with a speech decrying various ills that Democrats caused, from the electric vehicle mandate to paid family leave, and from early voting to letting 16-year-olds vote in school board elections. That came from Richard Foster, the temporary chair for the convention, meeting April 29 at the Modern Maturity Center in Dover.

Later, Loren Spivack, an author of several books criticizing Democrats, spoke about how people on the left have no principles and that capitalism is superior to socialism.

Each county later broke off into caucuses, where candidates for party leadership made their cases.

Julianne Murray, who was running against incumbent Jane Brady to lead the Delaware GOP, said she

would unite the party and energize Republican voters in the state.

"We need to be talking to two different groups," she said. "Republicans who aren't voting. Republicans who are voting are here. We need to be talking to the ones who aren't voting and how we can get them reengaged. Voting is an emotional response. We [will] find the issue that hooks them."

One Sussex County delegate asked Murray about an incident involving her husband calling Republican leadership RINOs, Republicans in name only, on a radio show. Murray said that she is not her husband, that she supports the Republican Party and she won't control what people say.

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# MATT MEYER, LAUREN COOKSEY MARRY IN REHOBOTH

BY BETSY PRICE

New Castle Council's highest-ranking elected official married his girlfriend of two years May 7 on the Rehoboth Bay waterfront. County Executive Matt Meyer and Dr. Lauren Cooksey said I do in an intimate ceremony before 90 guests at [Rehoboth Beach Country Club](#). It is his first marriage and her second.

Their romance and wedding seemed to largely fly below the state's political and social radars. Meyer joked Tuesday that he uses his skills as a former diplomat in Iraq to keep his private life private.

"We did a lot of redirection there," he said. "I learned a lot of the tricks of the trade. I still have a few up my sleeves." Then he started laughing. "It wasn't like it was a big secret," he said. "It was private."

"We're both in sort of big loud environments," Cooksey said. "So it was nice to keep something just for us and our family and friends."

Their busy schedules mean they can't attend every political or social event together. His job as county exec keeps him on the move for long days, often through weekends, as does her job as an emergency room doctor. She is vice chair of ChristianaCare's emergency department. Meyer and Cooksey met through a friend two years ago.

"It was sort of a no pressure situation," Cooksey said. "We just sort of hung out with a mutual friend and really hit it off."

Meyer said he always wanted to get married.

"I think I was always determined not to settle," he said. "And I feel like I didn't settle. I'm not one of these guys who's like, 'I'm never getting married.' You wait and you look until you find the right one. I feel like I've found the right one."

Cooksey said their relationship seemed so natural from the start that she never feared getting involved with Meyer, even with the added stress of a political career. Meyer is expected to run for governor in the 2024 race.

"I think we're really good at separating it," she said. "Both of us compartmentalize work and home and are really respectful of the boundaries of both."

## TRAVEL ADVENTURES

The couple made it a point to vacation together as they got to know each other. "We've traveled quite a bit," Meyer said. Not only did they take trips together to Washington, D.C., New York and Vermont, but also Kenya, Honduras and Hawaii.

That is going to make planning a honeymoon hard. "We've gone to all these honeymoon destinations already," Meyer said.

Cooksey said she came to admire Meyer's commitment. "What you see with Matt is what you get," she said. "He's really committed to his career, but he's also fiercely committed to family and his private life."

At the same time, he's never pressured her to be more visible or engaged in his political life.

"He lets me be involved where I want to be and I am able to step back," she said. "I've got my own career and kids, and I'm able to focus on that. So there's really a good balance."

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# JEEP TO STOP SENDING GAS-POWERED WRANGLERS TO DE DEALERS

BY SAM HAUT

As DNREC mulls proposed electric vehicle regulations, Jeep dealers in Delaware may see the flow of new cars altered immediately. Santosh Viswanathan, CEO of Lakeshore Motor Co. in Seaford, said dealers were told by Jeep about two weeks ago that soon they will no longer get regular orders of gas-powered Jeep Wranglers. Instead, dealers will be sent Jeep Wranglers 4xe, the electric version of a Wrangler.

Viswanathan said dealers expect the same thing to happen with other Jeep models.

“They haven’t spoken too much about the rest of the models, but I’m sure others will follow,” Viswanathan said. “Our main concern was, and many of my fellow Jeep dealers’ concerns, was the Wranglers because they are the best selling lineup in the Jeep brand.”

The cheapest 2023 Jeep Wrangler Lakeshore Motor

Co. has available costs \$48,895, while the cheapest 4xe Wrangler costs \$59,130. The reason for the change, Viswanathan said, is because Delaware agreed to follow the lead of California on the Advanced Clean Car II rules, something he thinks should have gone through the legislature.

“Normally things of this magnitude are run through the legislature,” Viswanathan said. “But in this particular case, we’ve farmed that job out to the Department of Natural Resources, whereby an appointed secretary of DNREC is going to impose, unilaterally, DNREC’s policies, rules and procedures on the public...People in the legislature are not going to have any say in this.”

Lakeshore Motor Co. now has five electric Jeep Wranglers and four plug-in hybrids available for sale out of 56 vehicles in its new inventory, and no electric

vehicles in its used inventory of 46 vehicles.

While Jeep will stop sending bulk orders of gas Wranglers, Viswanathan said they will still send dealerships Wranglers if requested, but it could take up to 90 days to receive the vehicle.

Under the **proposed regulations**, which DNREC closed the public comment period on May 26, car dealerships in Delaware would need to have 35% of new vehicles be electric by 2025, and then increase that by about 8% each year, until it gets to 100% by 2035.

Several other states, including Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington State already have adopted similar regulations. **Colorado** is holding stakeholder meetings throughout 2023 while it considers the rules.

Asked how he’d feel about the rule if it had been voted on by the legislature, Viswanathan said he didn’t want to speculate but that the legislature is more deliberative.

“Some of the outcomes that come from deliberation tend to be more of what the public might desire and want,” he said.

Viswanathan is also the chairman of the legislative affairs committee for the Delaware Automobile and Truck Dealers’ Association and a managing partner at Willis Ford Smyrna.

Elton Caballero, a sales representative with the Preston Auto Group in Wilmington, said they have heard the same thing from Jeep, but also don’t know when the change will happen.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

# CARVERTISE OPENS HEADQUARTERS ON WILMINGTON RIVERFRONT



BY BETSY PRICE

A home-grown company that puts advertising on cars celebrated its sleek new headquarters Thursday.

**Carvertise's** operations and dispatch crews moved under I-195 from its warehouse and production facility in Wilmington's Browntown neighborhood to a \$1.2 million, 15,000-square-foot home in the Shipyard Center on the Christina riverfront. The space, renovated in a modern industrial design with whites and grays and a touch of blondish wood beneath exposed black HVAC ducts, bears no resemblance to the outlet store and bank that once occupied at 974 Justison St.

Most importantly, said CEO Mac Mcleod during a Thursday tour of the space, the new offices will allow the company, which wraps cars in vinyl decal material, to continue growing. It's seen a 55% year-over-year sales growth in 2022—Mcleod won't say exactly what reve-

nues are—and the staff has grown from 20 in 2021 and then 30 in 2022, before hitting 55 right now. The building has room for 150, he said.

Carvertise wanted to stay in Delaware, where it began a decade ago when Mcleod co-founded it with Greg Star, while the two were students at the University of Delaware. One of their first customers was ShopRite grocery stores. CEO Chris Kenny remembers Alan Levin of the Delaware Economic Development Office asking him to take a chance on the two. Kenny, who also is owner of Delaware LIVE, did.

"I think the growth is amazing," he said Thursday before the grand opening. ShopRite's headquarters and flagship store now is just across the river from Carvertise's new headquarters.

"They never gave up. They kept pressing and charging

forward," Kenny said. "It's a really nice home-grown success story."

## EXPANDING NATIONALLY

Even though Delaware business now accounts for only 5% of the company's revenues, and it boasts national work with Coca-Cola, Netflix, NBCUniversal, 7-Eleven, EA Sports, NASCAR and GlaxoSmithKline, Mcleod said they wanted the headquarters to stay local.

"This area is the heart and soul of our organization, and we're excited to invest and grow in the community that grew and shaped us," Mcleod said in a press statement. "It feels right."

After searching for the right space for a few years, Pettinaro showed the company the riverfront space and Carvertise spent the next 18 months planning the renovation with Mitchell & Associates.

The time spent picking designs and sourcing materials seemed to move like molasses, McLeod said. It was tricky to balance the design so it was elegant but not off-puttingly posh. The two-phase construction flew by, he said.

Pettinaro Construction did the remodel, sharing some of the expenses now. They will be loaded back into company's 10-year lease in a deal referred to as a tenant improvement allowance, Mcleod said.

Phase one was the front of the building, with executive offices down a dark corridor and dispatchers sitting in the windows fronting the building. Phase two was the back two-thirds of the building, with conference rooms and offices running along one wall and offices on the other. The space between them holds desks.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

# STATE'S 2024 BUDGET OF \$5.6 BILLION JUMPS 10% OVER 2023

BY SAM HAUT

A 2024 state budget that's 10% higher than 2023's led eight Republicans to vote against it Thursday in the House of Representatives, but that didn't stop it from passing. [House Bill 195](#), sponsored by Rep. William Carson, D-Smyrna, delineated how the \$5.6 billion budget will be spent over the next fiscal year, which starts July 1. Carson is the vice chairman of the Joint Finance Committee, which hammers out the budget.

It's about a \$600 million increase from the [previous year's budget](#), partly because of millions that had to be devoted to Medicaid and retiree healthcare.

Rep. Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden, announced he would not vote for the bill because of that increase. He thanked the committee for their work in trying circumstances.

"That 10% is now baked in," said Yearick, who is also the House minority whip. "If we look at inflation 4%, 5%, 8% and look at it compared to the state of our economy growing, I don't think we're growing that fast."

Yearick said he's not advocating against something specific, such as increases to teacher pay or additional increases to any department.

"However, I do rise with concern that that level of an increase is not only going to make the next year's budget harder, but the following year and the following year."

Fellow Republican Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, a member of the Joint Finance Committee, said the larger than usual increase was due to inflation.

"I think this is one of the largest increases we've ever had," Briggs King said. "And people are going to look back and they're gonna say that's almost a 10% increase. And I'm going to say yes, but when we're facing unprecedented inflation that we have 8% or more, the state has to keep pace with that inflation."

The budget passed 32 to 8. It now heads to the Senate for consideration.

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# SEAFORD, EV BILLS PASS HOUSE, SO GOP VOTES TO OK BOND BILL

BY SAM HAUT

Republicans returned to the House Friday to vote in favor of the bond bill after the House passed the change to Seaford's charter and another bill on electric vehicles.

**House Substitute 1 for House Bill 121**, sponsored by Rep. Daniel Short, R-Seaford, will approve a charter change for the town of Seaford allowing an LLC that owns a business in town to have a single vote in municipal elections, even if the owner lives outside the city. The bill passed 34 to 6 and now makes its way to the Senate for consideration.

The House Republicans had walked out Thursday after the Seaford bill failed when they were under the impression that it had the votes to pass. It meant there were not enough votes to pass the capital improvement budget bill. After Friday's vote, Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, said he appreciated House Bill 121 passing.

"We were very grateful that our colleagues were able to rerun the bill despite some of the antics that went on within the last 24 hours," Ramone said. "And we're also very grateful for those of you who chose to support... Rep. Short's initiatives, very kind and very much appreciated."

Speaker of the House Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, apologized after Ramone's comments.

"I would like to offer you guys an apology because I messed something up yesterday," Schwartzkopf said. "We should have never had our organization meeting during caucus time. We should have come in earlier, that's my call, my mistake. We should have done it on either Wednesday or Thursday before caucus. I'll accept that responsibility."

The House also passed 21 to 20 **House Bill 123**, sponsored by Ramone, which would require the Department

of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to get approval from the legislature before it restricts the sale of gas-powered vehicles. Republicans have been pushing for the **legislature** to restrict DNREC in some way after a new regulation was announced that would have Delaware follow California rules and require all new vehicles sold in Delaware to be zero-emission vehicles by 2035.

House Bill 123, which was introduced on April 20 and had previously not gotten enough signatures to be approved by the House Natural Resources & Energy Committee, will now make its way to the Senate for consideration.

Ramone said Friday that he doesn't know if House Bill 121 or House Bill 123 will pass the Senate. Friday is the last day of the 2023 General Assembly session.

**Senate Bill 160**, sponsored by Sen. Jack Walsh, D-Stanton, would allocate \$1,409,448,938 to address capital improvement projects across the state and is this year's bond bill. It now makes its way to Gov. John Carney for his signature.

Joe Fulgham, communications director for the House Republican Caucus, said the discussion about getting House Bill 121 and the bond bill passed ended up including House Bill 123.

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# WORST KEPT SECRET: LONGHURST IS NEW HOUSE SPEAKER

BY SAM HAUT

On Friday, speaker of the House Pete Schwatzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, choked up several times as he announced that he would be stepping down and that **Rep. Valerie Longhurst**, D-Bear, will succeed him as the new speaker. It will be the first time a woman has been elected the Speaker of the House in Delaware.

With Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall-Long presiding over the Senate, it also will be the first time that women have presided over both legislative chambers at one time. Schwatzkopf called it a historic night for the state.

## LONGHURST'S ELECTION

Longhurst thanked Schwatzkopf for the attention he had paid to her and for singling her out for leadership. She broke down into tears and said, "I love you, Pete. You're a great man."

The House recessed to have dinner and returned to pass **House Resolution 25**, officially naming Longhurst as speaker. After House Resolution 25 passed unanimously, Schwatzkopf called her to the dias amid booming applause. As she took the oath, lots of cameras were aimed at her.

Schwatzkopf said he has a gift for her, a gavel.

"It's the hammer that Gov. Ruth Ann Minner had," he told Longhurst, when Minner was lieutenant governor.

"Congratulations and carry that thing and beat everybody in the head with it," he said, to great laughter.

In accepting the job, Longhurst pointed out that the Delaware legislature was 300 years old, but it was only a century ago that women won the right to vote. The House will now for the first time have all-female leader-

ship, including Majority Leader Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle, the first person of color elected to leadership, as majority leader and Rep. Kerri Evelyn Harris, the first LGBTQ member of House leadership, as minority whip.

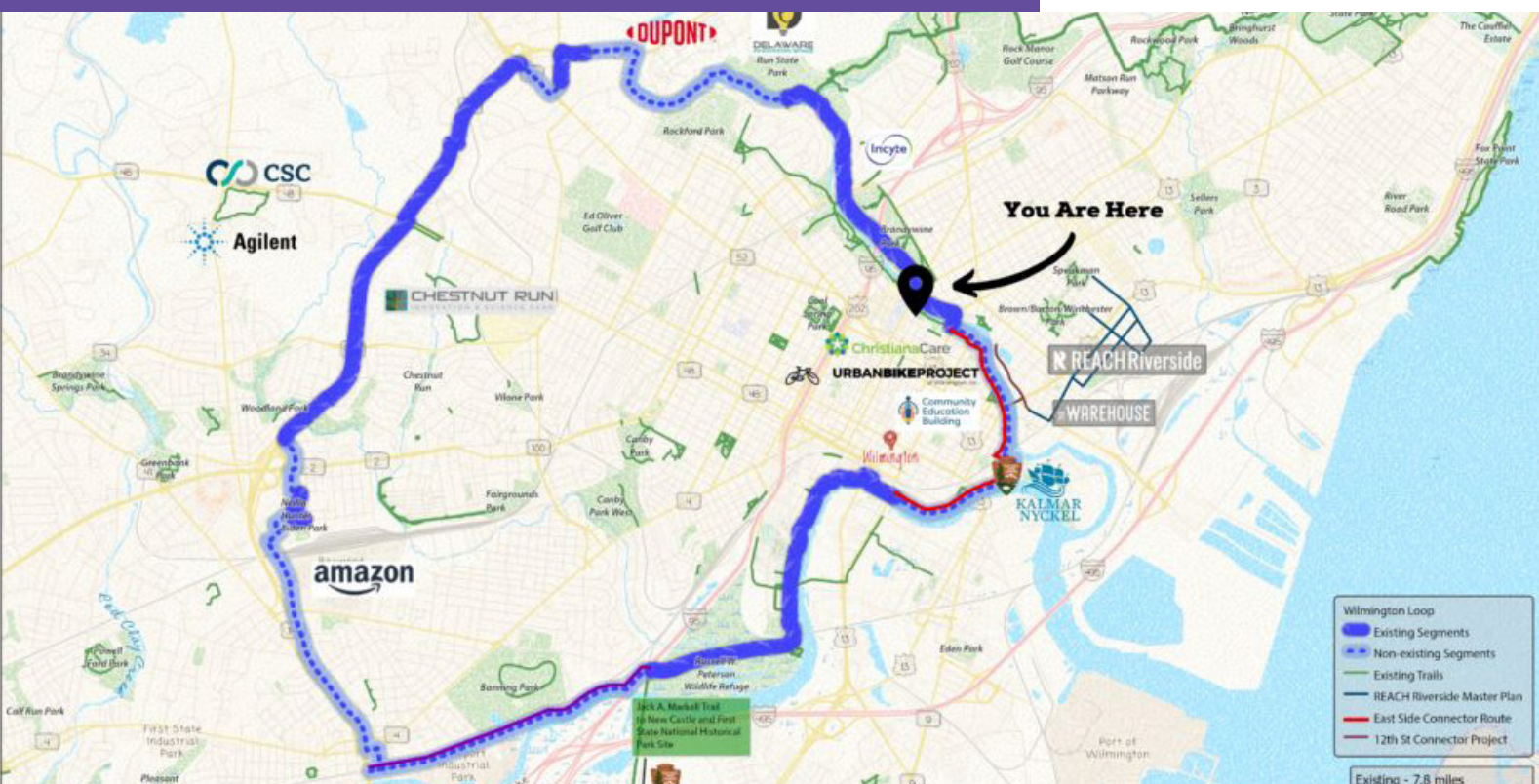
Minor-Brown delighted in being the first to call Longhurst "Madam Speaker," and led the House members in picking up a white rose and handing it to Longhurst with a hug. Minor-Brown also noted that as she was being elected majority leader, the U.S. Supreme Court was announcing its decision to end affirmative action at colleges and universities.

"But even in this historic moment, as we celebrate the first woman speaker and a majority-minority leadership team," Minor-Brown said, "we can't lose sight of the fact that we're living through the second wave of the civil rights movement... But while those challenges lie ahead, we know that there's hope. And this right here in this chamber gives us hope."

Harris said the legislature does something every session to make Delaware more equitable.

"Delaware is starting to heal the wrongs of this nation," Harris said. "Every time a general assembly is elected into office, over the last several years, we've seen change. Every time there's a leadership vote, every time we pass legislation that protects women's health care, that makes sure that there are more civil rights, to make sure that people are getting a second chances when they've made a mistake, that makes sure that we are a nation of the people, a state of the people."

[READ MORE HERE](#)



## BY BETSY PRICE

A group of business, community and government leaders would like to see several New Castle County walkable bike trails connected to become a seamless 16-mile **Wilmington Loop**. Doing so, says leaders of the coalition, would transform the city's economy and quality of life because it would:

- Connect communities, jobs, schools, cultural institutions and state and national parks.
- Create safe paths for people to walk or bike for recreation or to get to work.
- Enhance and remove barriers for isolated and underserved neighborhoods.
- Encourage direct economic development in the form of stores, restaurants, offices, homes and entertainment venues along the path.
- Become the kind of destination amenity that attracts residents and corporations to the area.

“It would change the whole dynamic,” said Scott Johnson, leader of the Wilmington Loop Coalition and a developer with **Johnson Commercial Real Estate**.

A Wilmington Loop would tie together the Northern Delaware Greenway Trail, the Jack Markell Trail, the cities of Wilmington, Newport and New Castle, multiple

# LOOP COALITION: FINISH WALKABLE BIKE TRAIL AROUND WILMINGTON

National Heritage sites, state and local parks and hundreds of thousands of people with great jobs, restaurants and cultural attractions, the coalition said in a press release. Johnson pointed to the Atlanta Beltway in Atlanta, Georgia, the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville, SC, and the Arlington Loop in Arlington, VA, all of which run through city, park and natural lands.

“You look at any small, big or medium-sized city that has done this, and it's changed the whole benefit of accessibility around the city,” said Johnson, who is an avid biker and runner. No state in the region offers such an amenity, the coalition said.

Completing the loop would require building three links: one between Newport and Kirkwood Highway; one through Rockford Park; and a 2.1-mile piece through Wilmington's East Side, where transformation already is taking place with the building of new neighborhoods in what had been a blighted area. The East Side Connector would link the Brandywine and Christina River trails, both of which end on the East Side, giving every neighborhood in and bordering the city safe and easy access resources and recreation, Johnson said.

It's an idea that Logan Herring Sr., chief executive officer of the **WRK Group**, says speaks real truth to the issue of community investments and connections. His group is building the new East Side houses and operates the Teen Warehouse.

“Transportation is one of the biggest barriers to access resources,” Herring said from Boston, where he was attending a conference. “So if we're going to think about innovative ways of connecting the community so things aren't seen as ‘best for them and it's not for me,’ one of the simplest ways to do it is through a mode of transportation.”

“That's not necessarily a bus line that you have to walk blocks to get to and so forth. You know, everybody can hop on a bicycle or walk, and I believe—and it's very optimistic—but I believe that it's possible.”

[READ MORE HERE](#)



## FAITHFUL FRIENDS: 50% MORE PETS SAVED IN FOUR YEARS WITH NEW HQ

BY JAREK RUTZ

**Faithful Friends Animal Society** is hoping to have the capacity to save 25% more animals in the next two years with its new headquarters, its founder said after a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday.

“When we started Faithful Friends [in 2000], publicly-funded shelters in Delaware had a 90 percent kill rate, and today, Delaware is one of just three no-kill states in the country,” said Jane Pierantozzi, founder and executive director of the animal welfare nonprofit.

The organization moved from its previous location at 12 Germy Drive in Wilmington to 165 Airport Road in New Castle.

“We have space for about 65 dogs and about 200 cats and kittens, plus our foster care system which we support is another 300 animals,” Pierantozzi said. “We hope that the lifesaving will increase by 25% in two years because of the new location...and hopefully a 50%

increase in four years.” Based on the current numbers of animals being helped by the shelter, Faithful Friends wants to expand its services to about 140 more animals in the next two years and 280 more in the next four.

One challenge the shelter is facing, she said, is a slowdown in dog adoptions across the country, which she says is largely because of the struggling economy.

The shelter has an annual operating budget of \$3.9 million. “We rely on individual donors mainly for running this facility,” Pierantozzi said.

Construction on the new \$11 million facility began in May 2017 and was supposed to be done in 2021, but delays were inevitable with the pandemic. Through the legislature’s Bond Bill, the shelter received about \$1.4 million from the state over a few separate allocations for the new headquarters.

During the ceremony, three pet owners who adopted

from Faithful Friends shared their stories on the importance of saving animals and how their pets have become an integral part of their families.

One was a police officer, Rick Jones, in Pennsylvania who trained his adopted dog to become a certified police dog. He said his dog Jack is the first rescue police K-9 in Pennsylvania and he predicted that more rescue dogs will become members of the police force.

“Pets are essential to human mental health and sometimes physical health,” said New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer, who is running for governor next year. “This piece of land makes a tremendous statement about the values of our community.”

Among a slew of gratitude for individual and group donors, construction workers, designers and more, Board President Bob Wasserbach thanked Colonial School District for gifting the land to the shelter.

Some of what Faithful Friends has done since its inception to protect animals in Delaware include:

- Working with state officials on Delaware’s first spay/neuter legislation, which created a public spay/neuter fund for pet owners on public assistance and required all shelters to spay/neuter pets before adoption.
- Opening Delaware’s first free pet food and supply bank, which became a model for other organizations throughout the state.
- Leading the creation of Delaware’s Animal Shelter Standards Law, which overhauled how shelters manage animals that are in their care and required shelters to publish their animal outcomes.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# 17 SCHOOLS SHOW LESS THAN 10% PROFICIENCY ON STATE TESTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Seventeen Delaware schools had single-digit proficiency rates in math, reading or the SAT on state-administered tests. More than 200 public schools take part in the Smarter Balanced test, which measures the knowledge of students in grades three through eight in math and reading, and the SAT for all juniors in high school. Ten of those grammar and middle schools had less than 10% of their students score as proficient on the Smarter Balanced Assessment. Another seven had single-digit proficiency in the SAT, which once stood for Scholastic Aptitude Test, but now just goes by its initials.

Delaware is one of eight states that give the SATs to all 11th graders, which lowers the state's scores. In most states, it is usually taken only by students headed to college.

If a student is not proficient, that means they do not meet grade-level expectations and standards in a given

subject, but it doesn't necessarily mean they cannot read, write or do math.

"While we want to see all schools at or above the state average for proficiency, we need to remember that these scores are just one data point," said Kendall Massett, executive director of the [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#). "Students and schools are much more than one test score, which is why our Delaware report cards have multiple measures for schools."

However, Massett said, it is encouraging to see a decrease in the number of schools with single-digit proficiency over the last few years. Last year, 10 schools had single-digit proficiency scores for SAT, and 16 for the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

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# WILMINGTON FRIENDS SCHOOL TO MARK 275TH ANNIVERSARY

BY JAREK RUTZ

For Ellie Alexander Poorman, attending **Wilmington Friends School** means much more than just education—it means family, and generations of it.

The historic school, founded in 1748, is older than the **country**. Friends will start celebrating its 275th anniversary Sept. 5 when it opens its doors for the 2023-2024 school year. Poorman, 88, sent all four of her children and several grandchildren to Wilmington Friends, which is Delaware’s oldest existing school.

“You feel a great kinship with the school and its values, which are important to you and ones that you want to pass on to your children and grandchildren,” she said.

Those Quaker values the school is founded on—simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship—prepare people to connect with others and live a life of service while building confidence in young people, Poorman believes.

Over the centuries, those values created a nursery of sorts for leadership in the Wilmington community and beyond, according to “A Gift in Trust: Wilmington Friends School, A Celebration of our first 250 years”, written in 1998. The school’s alumni include nationally notable journalists, politicians and government officials.

Poorman family members are among the 40,000-plus students who have attended the school since 1879, records show.

## WILMINGTON FRIENDS VALUES

Wilmington Friends was among the Quaker schools founded around the country and in the British Isles in the 1700s, embracing the philosophy of **George Fox**. He was an English dissenter and a founder of the Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as the Quakers.

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## WINTERTHUR'S ANN LOWE EXHIBIT: HISTORY, FASHION ON PARADE

BY BETSY PRICE

A dazzlingly elegant new exhibition at [Winterthur Museum](#) celebrates the work of the largely unheralded Black designer who created Jacqueline Kennedy's wedding dress, among other society haute couture pieces. "[Ann Lowe: American Couturier](#)" features 40 of Lowe's dresses, opening with a glittering white fairy tale ball gown the owner liked so much she rewore it as her wedding dress. Many of the dresses in the show have never been on display before.

The centerpiece of the exhibit is a recreation of Lowe's 1953 silk taffetta dress for the marriage of Jacqueline Bouvier to John Kennedy, meticulously remade by University of Delaware professor Katya Roelse and three of her students. The original is in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston, MA. It is too fragile to display or move. When the Winterthur exhibit ends, the copy will be sent to the library for future

visitors to see.

The simple but highly effective arrangement of gowns in the exhibit will leave onlookers with a deep appreciation of Lowe's creativity, but not a strong understanding of the Alabama native, her life or what it must have been like to have been the first Black designer competing in a world that was not. Elizabeth Wray, associate curator at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City and guest curator of the Winterthur exhibit, fills in some of those gaps in a new book based on the exhibit. It will be the first scholarly look at Lowe's career, Winterthur said.

Wray said she hoped those attending the exhibit will come away understanding that Lowe was a significant and impactful American designer.

"And when we tell the story of American design," Wray said, "she needs to be in that story."

### WHO WAS ANN LOWE?

Lowe was born in rural Clayton, AL, the great-granddaughter of an enslaved woman. She learned to sew from her mother and grandmother, who ran a dress-making business, and dropped out of school at 14. When her mother died, she took over the business.

In 1917, she moved to New York City, where here she enrolled at S.T. Taylor Design School, according to a *Daytona Beach Morning Journal* story. The school was segregated and Lowe was made to attend classes in a room alone. She still excelled, completing the course in six months.

Lowe's own career began to take off after she was spotted in a department store in Dothan, AL, by a Florida woman, Wray said. Josephine Lee, who had grown up in Alabama but lived in Florida, thought the outfit Lowe was wearing was so chic that Lee asked Lowe where she had gotten it, Wray said. When Lee found out that Lowe had designed and made it, Lee convinced Lowe to move to Florida to make clothes there, Wray said.

Lowe's career would take her to New York, where she worked at first uncredited for major department stores. One example: She designed the dress that actress Olivia de Havilland wore to accept the Academy Award for Best Actress in 1946, but the name on the dress was Sonia Rosenberg, according to the book "Women Designers in the USA, 1900–2000: Diversity and Difference."

Lowe eventually opened her own business, catering to generations of famous families, with name such as du Pont, Auchincloss, Rockefeller, Roosevelt, Lodge, Post, Bouvier and Whitney.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# SUSSEX CENTRAL STUDENT FILES LAWSUIT

BY JAREK RUTZ

A former Sussex Central High School student is suing its principal and assistant principal, saying they invaded her privacy and caused emotional distress by repeatedly showing a video of her bare breast, exposed during a fight and creating a meme of it.

Aniya Harmon, 18, graduated from the school in May. She is suing the school, Indian River School District, Principal Bradley Layfield and Assistant Principal Matthew Jones for invasion of privacy, conspiracy to invade privacy, intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress and the idea that Layfield and Jones were officials who should have known better. Harmon's suit does not specify a damages amount. It asks for whatever compensation the jury/court will award plus costs and interest, attorney's fees and punitive damages, which are awarded to punish wrongdoers.

Harmon was a senior at Sussex Central High School in Georgetown at the time of a May 17 incident in which she was allegedly approached and attacked by another student. A faculty member at the high school attempted

to pull Harmon away from the scene when Harmon's shirt was pulled down, revealing her full right breast.

The incident was captured by a surveillance camera and, according to the complaint, Layfield subsequently shared the video—without editing or blurring Harmon's breast—with other faculty members at the school. The complaint also contends that Sussex Central High School Assistant Principal Matthew Jones worked with Layfield to create a meme using a still shot of Harmon and her exposed breast. According to the complaint, Jones superimposed the face of Janet Jackson over Harmon's face. Jones then allegedly shared this meme with other faculty members. The image is in reference to Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction that left her breast exposed during the 2004 National Football League Super Bowl halftime show.

Harmon is represented by Ryan Julison from [The Igwe Law Firm](#) in Philadelphia, and the lawsuit is filed in the Superior Court of New Castle County.

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# CONSORTIUM: EXPAND PROGRAM GIVING PREGNANT WOMEN \$1,000 A MONTH

BY BETSY PRICE

A pilot program that gave 40 pregnant New Castle County women \$1,000 a month for 24 months had greater than expected health and other benefits, the sponsors said.

The program saw a 324% return on investment, organizers said at a press conference announcing the result.

Among its outcomes:

- \$229,520 in reduced hospital stays
- \$21,600 in reduced emergency department visits
- 50% of the monthly stipend went directly toward groceries/food, household items/basic needs and gas/ auto/ transportation; 30% of which went directly to groceries/food
- 89% of the participating moms received prenatal care
- 81% of their babies had no complications at birth

Expanding the Guaranteed Basic Income program could help reduce both infant and maternal deaths,

while helping women take better care of themselves and their children, said Delaware House Majority Leader Melissa Minor-Brown, R, New Castle.

“At this time, we are focused on sharing the strong results of this pilot with our partners and the public in the hopes that we can all advocate for supporting sustainability of the program,” Minor-Brown said. “The ultimate goal would be a continuation and expansion of the GBI program throughout Delaware.”

The program was a project of the **Delaware Healthy Mother and Infant Consortium**, which was created as successor to the Infant Mortality Task Force.

The consortium was tasked with preventing infant and maternal mortality as well as improving the health outcomes of infants and women of childbearing age throughout Delaware.

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# DELAWARE MARIJUANA COMMISSIONER DESCRIBES CREATING NEW INDUSTRY

BY BETSY PRICE

As Delaware moves toward 2025 retail sale of recreational marijuana, lots of moving parts require decisions and implementation, the state's Marijuana Commissioner told a packed [New Castle County Chamber of Commerce](#) meeting Oct. 18.

Among those fine points are creating a digital infrastructure, formalizing regulations, and creating ways for people to apply for licenses, [Rob Coupe](#) said in a wide-ranging and detailed presentation. The state also must decide whether and how the medical marijuana industry will coexist with legal marijuana, he said.

One good thing about Delaware's timing, Coupe noted, is that the state can watch what New York, New Jersey, Maryland and other states have done and adopt their good ideas and try to avoid problems.

## THE NEW LAW

The new law allows people who are 21 or older to own one ounce of marijuana for personal use, but still prohibits consuming it in public or in a car. Instead of the ounce of flower buds to smoke, the law will allow 12 ounces of concentrated marijuana or 750 milligrams of TCH, the active ingredient in pot, which covers edibles, oils and other forms of marijuana. It prohibits growing marijuana for personal use or selling marijuana.

Four types of licenses related to the industry will be granted: growing, manufacturing, retail and testing. In every category, some licenses will be for social equity owners, who are people said to be unfairly impacted by drug laws that were not equally enforced, especially across racial lines.

Only about half the people who use marijuana smoke it, Coupe said. That's because the fire ends up consuming more of the weed than they want. So about half of Delaware retail offerings will be in other forms, he said.

Medical marijuana sales, which are not taxed, were \$49 million in 2022 with only 17,000 participants, Coupe said. Recreational sales will be taxed at 15% when sales begin in 2025 and the state expects to have between 100,000 to 180,000 users, Coupe said.

Members of the Delaware Economic and Finance Advisory Committee were told Monday that the tax on recreational marijuana is expected to generate about \$8 million in 2025, but that money would not go into the General Fund.

Coupe—who brought a notebook containing a print-out of the laws—noted that the tax money is required to be used to support the Office of the Marijuana Commissioner, the Marijuana Regulation Fund and the Justice Reinvestment Fund. But, he pointed out, the law also says that any remaining money may be appropriated by the General Assembly as it sees fit and he thought that meant it would go back to the General Fund.

## CREATING THE SYSTEM

The law authorized 14 jobs to create and oversee the recreational sales program. They included:

- Five for the Office of Marijuana Commissioner, including Coupe.
- 14 for Delaware Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement.
- Seven for the Department of Revenue
- Two for the Department of Agriculture
- Six in Health Systems Protection for the Division of Public Health.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



## EVERNORTH TO EXPAND IN NEW CASTLE, ADD SPECIALITY PHARMACY

BY BETSY PRICE

Cigna Group's **Evernorth Health Services** will use a \$4.62 million state grant to expand into a bigger building in New Castle and add employees over the next four years. The move will group several of Cigna's companies—Evernorth, its specialty pharmacy Accredo Health Group and its specialty pharmaceutical distributor, CuraScript SD together for distribution of millions of doses of specialty medications for rare and complex conditions.

The \$4.62 million grant is said to be the largest given out this year by the state, followed by the \$4.5 million given to the **Agile Cold Storage's** new Claymont facility.

Accredo will move from its 34,000-square-foot facility near New Castle to another location with 200,000 square feet, the company said. The facility will be staffed at the beginning by about 90 existing Delaware employ-

ees including pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, warehouse associates and operations staff. Evernorth expects the number of employees to more than double.

They will support patients diagnosed with some of the most rare and complex conditions known today, as well as help providers who help treat these patients.

The Delaware Prosperity Partnership supported Evernorth's request to Delaware's Council on Development Finance for a Jobs Retention Grant, a Jobs Performance Grant, a Capital Expenditure Grant and a matching Training Grant.

Evernorth officials first about the move in the council's September meeting. Evernorth looks forward to deepening and expanding its ties in the community at its new location, said President Matt Perlberg.

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## CRAFTERS RACE TOWARD DEADLINE FOR FESTIVAL OF TREES WREATHS, DECOR

BY BETSY PRICE

T-minus 23 days until the New Castle County Festival of Trees opens Nov. 17, and Kris Hable is calmly gluing berries on a tiny wreath in the basement of a Parkwood home. The chairman of the festival's Marketplace, which offers wreaths, decor and gifts for sale, Hable is one of a handful of designers and crafters who make the bulk of the items for the store.

"We are without question the best Christmas decorations secret anywhere because we try to make everything as original as we can," said Hable, who's surrounded by piles of holiday materials waiting to be made into another wreath lining the walls of the basement. "Don't even try to organize anything," she said. "It just doesn't work."

The bonus for Festival of Trees shoppers is that each item is individually made and almost all are one of a kind. "So you're not going to see these wreaths and decorations in any store," she said. "You're not going to see 50 of the same thing or anything of that nature. And quite frankly, our prices are fantastic."

The most popular size for wreaths, she said, is 24 inches. Those will fit well on doors and over fireplaces and go for \$30 to \$50, she said.

Marketplace sales account for about a quarter of the festival's total profits, with the majority coming from its decorated trees. Most of those are sponsored by businesses or philanthropists and decorated by volunteers

before they go to those companies or a nonprofit for the holidays.

This year's New Castle County festival will take place Friday, Nov. 17, through Sunday, Nov. 19, at Brantwyn Estate. Admission is free. In addition to shopping, the weekend features musical entertainment and the fun of seeing all the trees.

Hable got involved with the Festival of Trees about a decade ago helping create gift baskets for the Marketplace. "A friend of mine said, 'Kris is good at putting baskets together,' so I went to help them," Hable said.

She liked the operation, the people and the cause and gradually became more involved. In the last decade, she said, the number of crafters supporting the event has fallen, mostly because of attrition.

### FESTIVAL OF TREES CYCLE

Now a core group of about six, mostly retired, starts meeting in March to create the majority of the wreaths in the basement of Tom and Linda Brennan Jones' home. "They lock us in," Hable jokes. "They don't even feed us."

They try to make items in a variety of holiday styles, so everyone who walks in can find something they like, Hable said.

"Every year we start the day after Thanksgiving, right after the festival ends and we go everywhere and start purchasing our supplies for next year." That's when Christmas decorations, ribbon and other materials start doing on sale for 50% off.

"We buy right through February," she said. "Sometimes we're lucky enough to get bulk items because the store purchases too many of them or something of that nature."

[READ MORE HERE](#)





## JANVIER JEWELRY STORE'S STUNNING MURAL WOWS CUSTOMERS

BY BETSY PRICE

Joseph Janvier Jewelers doesn't go out of its way to call attention to itself—from the outside. The Elsmere business is housed in a nondescript brick building on Kirkwood Highway. Customers walk from a modest parking lot to the front door and press a bell to be admitted.

They walk in, and their mouths drop open. “Wow” is usually the next thing they say, or maybe, “No way.”

They're not reacting to the store's fine jewelry, glittering before them from brown and black wooden cases. They are talking about a dramatic 110-foot black, white, gray and red mural that wraps around the walls of the store. It's the work of landscape designer turned muralist Kent Krech of Wilmington.

“I wasn't trying to do an exact recreation by any means,” Krech said. “I just kind of make it up as I go along.”

The mural starts by depicting a swank jewelry row in a teeming metropolis (a fictional Philly?), shifting into a shopping and dining area in a smaller city (a fictional Wilmington?). It continues along a river waterfront (the Delaware? the Christina?) leading to a marshy bird sanctuary ([DuPont Environmental Education Center](#)?) with a biplane flying over the water in the direction of twin bridges (the Delaware Memorial?) that end with a scene featuring a sign pointing toward the beach.

Joseph Janvier had long told friends he didn't want big photos of jewelry on his wall. He wanted a mural of some kind. Then he met Krech at a networking event. Krech was subbing for a friend who couldn't make it and asked Krech to take his place and talk about his business.

“So what that means,” Janvier translates, “is he had the opportunity to give a 30-minute commercial about himself.”

Janvier invited Krech to his shop. “I want to show you something,” he told Krech.

When Krech walked in and saw the blank gray walls, the artist said, “Man, here we go. I like this idea.”

The original piece that Krech and store owner Joseph Janvier agreed on was the swank jewelry row, which takes up about 20 feet behind one counter. Krech showed him a crude sketch, complete with stick figures, and said he'd be back with a more detailed one.

“Yeahhhhhh. That's the idea,” Janvier said, when he saw it. “You might as well make this your gallery,” Janvier told Krech, reasoning “that way, he'd have time to do more than just my ideas. His ideas, too.”

They chose the color scheme from a piece of Riley Rae art already hanging on the wall, partly to be set off by the store's red carpet. Krech started in late February 2020, intending to work mostly on weekends because of his landscaping jobs. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit and Krech was suddenly able to devote more time to it.

As the mural's jewelry row took shape, it was getting a lot of attention from customers, and both Krech and Janvier liked it so much that Janvier told him to do the next wall, then the next. Then the next.

Finally, “he was like, nah, let's do the whole store,” Krech said. The artist has been working on the mural for almost four years.

As COVID-19 restrictions relaxed, Krech's landscape jobs picked up and he's more limited to work on weekends.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



BY JAREK RUTZ

Six Democratic state legislators are sponsoring legislation that would require all public schools to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students. [House Bill 125](#), whose primary sponsor is Rep. Sherae'a Moore, D-Middletown, was introduced in April, but never heard by the General Assembly, which returns to session in January. Moore declined an interview to discuss the bill.

The bill explains that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) eased program restrictions to allow for free breakfast and lunch for all students. However, the department's waivers expired on June 30, 2022, so Delaware schools participating in the [USDA School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program](#) were required to return to pre-pandemic policies on free meals.

"The Delaware Department of Education appreciates the intent of the legislation, but we realize the potential for a significant fiscal note," said Alison May, public

# BILL TO MANDATE FREE SCHOOL MEALS COULD COST STATE MILLIONS

information officer at the [Department of Education](#). The original fiscal note of the bill had a hefty state cost that included:

- \$31,635,852 (\$6,801,866 for breakfast and \$24,833,986 for lunch) in fiscal year 2024
- \$33,147,815 (\$7,125,645 for breakfast and \$26,022,170 for lunch) in fiscal year 2025
- \$34,804,569 (\$7,486,590 for breakfast and \$27,317,979 for lunch) in fiscal year 2026

The fiscal note—a projection of its cost—will be updated when the General Assembly reconvenes in January, May said.

One breakfast for one student is estimated to cost the state between 30 cents and \$2.17 depending on the need level of the school, and one lunch for one student is estimated to cost the state between 40 cents and \$3.56. There is no cost to the state for federally reimbursed free breakfasts or lunches. Approximately 9,022,550 breakfasts and 16,427,270 lunches are served in Delaware schools each year.

Some schools in low-income communities are part of the USDA's Community Eligibility Provision, which allows all their students to get free meals and districts are reimbursed by the federal government. Students who are not in CEP schools have to meet certain household incomes to qualify for free meals. Out of Delaware's 250 public schools, there are 127 CEP schools, according to Department of Education [data](#).

"You have to separate the emotion of wanting to ensure that no child goes to school hungry from what the state can afford to do," said Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover. "Middle class Delawareans will be asked to give more of their hard-earned dollars to pay for this program."

There is a national push to provide more free meals to students, largely initiated by Democrat legislation.

"Delawareans already pay for children from low-income households to receive free nutrition and adding to that bill by including households like mine may seem like a good idea until you realize that nothing is free and ultimately someone has to pay the bill," he said.

The idea that no child has to go to school hungry is one everyone supports, he said, but the state has programs in place to ensure that doesn't occur and adding millions of dollars to Delaware's budget at a time when the budget is already in a deficit is a mistake.

"A family of four can qualify for nearly \$300 in food stamp money a week if they meet income guidelines and those same children qualify for free and reduced lunch along with families who are challenged when it comes to income in their households," he said. "When you expand government programs like this one, you have to take away funding from other programs or you have to ask the taxpayer to give more at a time when they can ill afford to do so given the inflation and challenges this state and country are facing."



# WILMINGTON CONTINUES TO SEE WEAK DEMAND FOR OFFICE SPACE

BY PETER OSBORNE

Weaker demand for Wilmington office space coupled with rising interest rates and continuing corporate cost-cutting efforts is painting a dismal picture for the immediate future, according to a new [3Q 2023 Office Market Overview](#) by Newmark.

“Chief financial officers are looking at their remote and hybrid workers and thinking they can cut costs by downsizing,” said Newmark Senior Managing Director Wills Elliman.

Downtown’s vacancy rate of 31.3% particularly shocked him when he first reviewed the raw data, he said. “But are they cutting costs at the expense of the culture and soul of the firm? How do you advance in your career if you never see people—except behind a screen?” Elliman said. “There’s so much good about an office—conversation, collaboration and collegiality—that’s being lost.

“One of the reasons we’ll go back to the office is especially young people...they’re worried about their jobs. They have FOMAP: Fear Of Missing A Promotion.”

Elliman said the Wilmington Central Business District Class A market having 1.4 million square feet of available office space against a base of 4.6 million square feet base is completely out of bounds for where a normal office market should be.

“You normally see vacancy rates in the low teens when a market is in balance and landlords can gamble with concessions such as free rent and tenant improvements to entice tenants,” Elliman said.

“Landlords would love to have you, but the rising costs to upfit the space and higher interest rates can push rates from the mid-\$20s to the mid-\$30s” per square foot to make deals pencil out.

Wilmington’s downtown vacancy rate has steadily increased since the onset of the pandemic. Other statistics from the report include:

- Wilmington South (New Castle, Bear, Glasgow, Newark, etc.) had the biggest block of vacant space in the Wilmington MSA at 739,000 square feet.
- Wilmington West (Greenville, Hockessin, Pike Creek, etc.) had the lowest vacancy rate at 6.8%.
- Wilmington North (Highlands through Claymont) had the highest average Class A average asking rent at \$31.33, compared with the lowest Class A rate vs the lowest in Wilmington South at \$23.36 per square foot.

## OFFICE SPACE GIVEBACKS

Footprint reductions and space givebacks by some of the area’s largest office-using employers such as Capital One have created a large void difficult to backfill in a period of weaker office demand. There has only been one lease over 100,000 square feet completed in the past five years in downtown and that was the renewal for a law firm, with 133,000 square feet. Therefore, there was no associated absorption. Absorption is the rate at which commercial space is sold, leased or vacated over a specific period in a given market, described as positive or negative.

While that was happening, eight vacant blocks of space of at least 80,000 square feet were added to the downtown inventory. Those eight blocks combine to total more than 1.2 MSF of negative absorption.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# HOPE CENTER PLANS TO FACE BUDGET QUESTIONS WITH FACTS

BY PETER OSBOURNE

As homelessness increases in Delaware and COVID-related support dries up, the New Castle County Hope Center plans to roll out its new long-term sustainability strategy in January. It will include a companion dashboard demonstrating how big a dent in the problem the center has made over the past three years.

New Castle County purchased the former Sheraton Hotel on Airport Road off I-95 in early December 2020 for \$19.5 million from its share of federal CARES Act funding. Two weeks later, it reopened the 192-room hotel as a temporary emergency shelter to protect homeless state residents from winter weather and the coronavirus. But federal COVID support largely went away on Oct. 1, 2022.

Carrie Casey, general manager of the county's Department of Community Services, says funding worries keep her awake at night as she looks to plug gaps in her \$5 million annual budget. New Castle County does not provide operational support.

"We may charge \$50 a night," Casey said, "but the total cost including shuttle transportation, security, building costs and staffing, engineering, maintenance, case management and pet care is about \$80 a night."

Now, the East Coast's largest homeless shelter is helping families find permanent housing by tying the length of their stay to active participation in its programs. Those include seeking employment, attending substance abuse meetings and medical appointments, meeting curfews and treating center employees with respect.



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"We have kind of built the airplane in the air," says Casey. But this airplane lacks sufficient onboard data to understand basic metrics.

For example, more than 3,200 people have spent at least one night at the Hope Center, with 325 households finding permanent housing after getting back on track. Casey struggles to provide information on total room nights or how many people have moved into some kind of permanent housing.

During the COVID pandemic, the Hope Center had 450 people in the building at any given point, but today's numbers are closer to 300-350.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# WILMINGTON'S OFFICE-TO-HOUSING CONVERSIONS ADD ENERGY TO CITY

BY PETER OSBORNE

Chris Buccini bristles when he hears people talk about sky-high **vacancy rates** and slow demand in downtown Wilmington.

“When I look at the Northern Delaware market, we have probably had our best year ever,” says one of the three founders of **Buccini/Pollin Group** (BPG). “We’ve always been a big corporate town with companies like DuPont and MBNA, so we have some big blocks of corporate space that have been vacant in the past few years but are either being repurposed, or [buyers/big tenants] are taking a second look.”

Some of that repurposing includes converting the space from office to residential and those changes are helping turn the city into more of the liveable, walkable space that proponents have long advocated and sought.

“Creating a density of residents downtown helps increase the foot traffic to support local businesses and we find that as more people are on the streets, the more comfortable people feel,” says Sean Park, director of the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development. The influx of new residents adds to city wage tax revenue and encourages additional development, he said.

“Downtown Wilmington is a 25-year-old overnight success,” Chris Buccini says he tells people. “I think it’s healthier today than it’s been in half a century. It’s a disconnect to say otherwise.”

## BOLD GUESS ABOUT DOWNTOWN HOUSING

Adding more apartments in downtown Wilmington has been underway for two decades. Between 1999 and 2017, BPG purchased DuPont’s five-property headquar-

ters buildings, including the Nemours, DuPont and Brandywine buildings, and two parking garages. It has rebranded the complex as **Market West** and added the I.M. Pei building at 1105 North Market to the mix.

Heading into 2000, Chris and his brother Rob predicted demand for 5,000 apartments in downtown Wilmington based on an unscientific assumption that 10 percent of 50,000 downtown workers would be interested in living in a vibrant, affordable downtown. Rob Buccini said Tuesday that BPG-owned residential units will be at the 5,000 number within the next 18 months and then at 6,000 units shortly thereafter.

“The first apartments we ever did in Delaware were at the Nemours Building,” Chris Buccini says.

There, BPG repurposed 85 furnished corporate apartments into smaller unfurnished apartments.

“We just delivered the first 92, and we’ll be at a total of 250 units by next September and 350 in 2025,” he says.

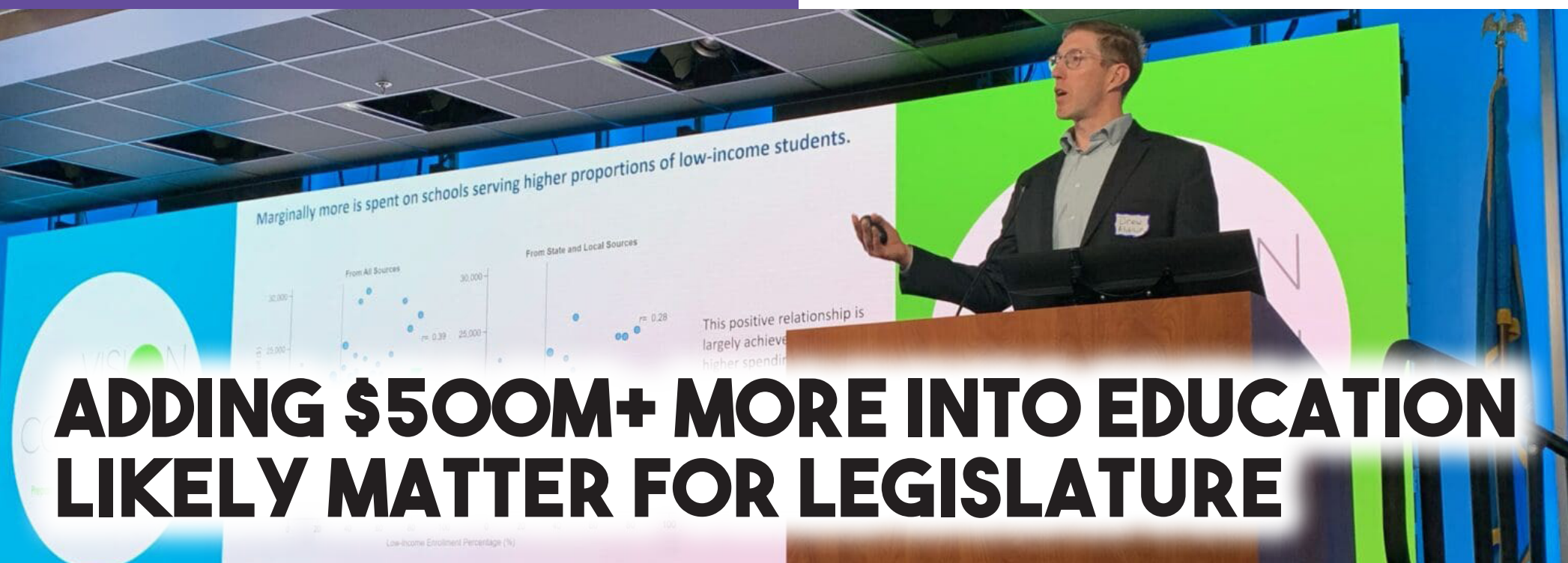
As a result, the Nemours conversion to a mixed-use complex reduced the available office space from the original 800,000 square feet first to 450,000 square feet of office space and now to just 150,000 square feet earmarked for coworking and flexible space.

## UPSIDE TO LOSING DUPONT, MBNA

Buccini concedes the loss of DuPont and MBNA has been a negative in many ways for downtown.

“But for the long-term sustainability of the city of Wilmington, it’s the greatest thing that could have happened” because MBNA and DuPont were islands within the city, he says.

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# ADDING \$500M+ MORE INTO EDUCATION LIKELY MATTER FOR LEGISLATURE

BY JAREK RUTZ

A long-awaited report released from the American Institutes for Research on school funding has shown that Delaware needs to allocate anywhere from \$590 million to \$1 billion more into education. That's between a 27% and 46% increase from the multi-billion dollar investment the state already has in public education, which is typically about a third of the state budget.

## THE REPORT

Drew Atchison, a senior researcher at the [American Institutes for Research](#), presented to a crowd of educators, advocates, parents and legislators the findings from the report, which cost Delaware \$700,000. One of the main recommendations of the report is to transition to a weighted funding system, rather than the current resource-based system that converts student enrollment into “units” and bases part of the funding on the experience level of teachers.

Some problems arise from this, including the fact that students with disabilities, English language learners or low-income students do not receive the additional funding to support their specialized needs.

The report focused on three areas: adequacy, equity and wealth neutrality with emphasis on transparency, flexibility and stability. In its recommended weighted system, each student receives a base amount of funding and then gets a multiplier if they are low-income, an English language learner or have a disability. Then, there is an effective weight—an adjusted weight accounting for the proportion of students for which a given weight applies.

For example, a low-income weight of 1.81 for a school where 31% of students are low-income results in an effective weight of 1.20, whereas a school where 70% of students are low-income would have an effective weight of 1.51.

The state of Maryland uses single weights for economic disadvantage, students with disabilities and English learners, multiplied by the base amount. New Jersey uses multiple economic disadvantage weights differentiated based on concentration, with the base amount differentiated by grade level.

Another issue with the current funding formula, Atchison noted, is some districts cannot raise local funds as much as others because of lower property values and a higher population of impoverished families. The state usually funds around 70% to a district or local share of 30%. But richer districts utilize more local funding—about \$2,000 more per student on average.

Because Delaware's current resource-based formula follows teachers more than students, low-income districts tend to have the least experienced teachers for a variety of reasons. Atchison and other advocates have said there's a direct correlation between the amount of money invested in education and student outcomes.

And while Delaware historically has been in the top 15 states of funding per student, the outcomes fall much short of the state's goals to have 76% of students proficient in English language arts and 70% proficient in math by 2030. Just 40.76% of students are proficient in English language arts and 30.91% are proficient in math, according to the Delaware Report Card.

Also, more than one out of five students are chronically absent, which means they miss 10% or more of the school days in an academic year.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



## DNREC FINALIZES EV REGULATIONS, CRITICS ARE NOT IMPRESSED

BY BETSY PRICE

DNREC has finalized state regulations about electric and other zero-emission vehicles it says will help Delaware achieve lower air pollution caused by light- and medium-duty cars. Instead of demanding that by 2035 all new car sales in Delaware must be electric, the program will end in 2032 when sales are expected to hit 82%.

That will address many of the issues opponents complained about, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control said in a press release while patting itself on the back for “taking a significant step to improve air quality and address climate change.” The regulations will not make those opposed happy.

“With over 93% of comments opposed to the Advanced Clean Car II regulations, we know where the public stands,” said Delaware Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown.

“Consumer demand just isn’t there and that fact is

evident by not only the public comments on the ACCII regulations, but also by recent announcements from major auto manufacturers stating they are cutting back on their production and sales goals of electric vehicles,” he said. “This regulation is bad for the availability of affordable, reliable and inexpensive vehicle ownership in Delaware and it should be stopped.”

### REGULATIONS BACKLASH

The subject drew a wide range of backlash with opposition to the higher costs of electric vehicles, the higher weight of those vehicles, the low mileage many of the current models get—especially if you live in a rural area that requires you to drive more compared to urban residents—and the fact that research continues in other areas.

Many also object to the way the regulations came about. Instead of being legislated, they were required in

an executive order from Gov. John Carney asking DNREC to model regulations on a California law.

The regulations require automakers to deliver an increasing amount of zero-emission vehicles—that’s politicized code for electric vehicles—for sale in Delaware. Zero-emission options, including battery-electric, plug-in hybrid electric and fuel cell electric vehicles, will be more accessible across the state.

Under the finalized regulation, starting with model year 2027, 43% of new cars and trucks sent to Delaware for sale will be ZEVs. That percentage is expected to increase to 82% in 2032. The regulations will expire in model year 2033. The changes will be phased in over the period and the regulations do not prohibit the sale or use of internal combustion engine vehicles, the DNREC press release said.

The decision was announced by a [DNREC Secretary’s Order](#) and is set for publication in the Delaware Register of Regulations on Dec. 1, 2023. It was informed by state law, the federal Clean Air Act, information included in the technical response memo and [comments](#) received from the public during the rule-making process.

“By adopting the revised regulation, DNREC aims to protect public health, reduce emissions and align with Delaware’s climate goals—all while providing consumers with cleaner and more sustainable transportation options,” said DNREC Secretary Shawn M. Garvin in the press release. “This decision will result in cleaner air in Delaware and strengthen protections for communities overburdened by exposure to tailpipe pollution.”

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Without these collaborators, this outlet would not be possible:

Bryan Shupe, CEO

Betsy Price, Editor

Sonja M. Frey, Publisher

*John Mollura Photography*

# Design your 2023 through Intentional Business and Marketing Planning

As a locally-owned company, Delaware LIVE News takes pride in working alongside regional businesses to develop digital marketing campaigns, through our daily news platforms.

From large corporations like Christiana Care, Delaware Tech Community College, and Delaware Department of Health to small shops like Fur Baby Pet Resort, Dolce Coffee Shop, and Benvenuto Tuscan Restaurant, we customize each plan to optimize the needs of each of our marketing partners.

I would love the opportunity to meet with you for 10-15 minutes to see how we can help. You can click the link to set up a meeting with me in our virtual office: <https://meetings.hubspot.com/shupe1>

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