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CONTENTS

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Headlines	3
Culture	7
Business	10
Food & Dining	13
Government.....	15
Education.....	23
Sports	28
Stay Connected	31



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Carney's State of the State



Ursuline and Caravel Go To State Championship

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Headlines

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TWO SENATORS BATTLE OVER DUELING SCHOOL SAFETY RESOLUTIONS

BY JAREK RUTZ

On the day Gov. John Carney preached the impact of working together in his State of the State address, the Senate watched a tense interaction divided by party lines that one legislator called “childish behavior.” The interaction between Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, and Sen. Bryan Townsend, D-Newark/Glasgow, and their similar education task force resolutions, were enough to cause comment from a veteran lawmaker during the session.

“We either correct our own misbehaviors and go forward and serve the public as we’ve sworn to do, or we continue this childish, ‘I can one-up-you’ behavior,” said Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel. “If we continue that,

we don’t serve our people. We only hurt them and that we all should be ashamed of.”

The fracas began after a quick, smooth unanimous Senate vote Tuesday on a bill relating to educators donating days off to one another with a resolution that would create a task force focused on school discipline.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 117, sponsored by Buckson, who was an educator and is a member of the Senate Education Committee, would establish the Classroom Behavior and School Discipline Task Force. The 25-person task force would be responsible for reporting findings and recommendations to improve student behavior in schools.


Fights, student bullying and disrespect to teachers are common tales in the legislature and at school board meetings. That has fueled concern about school safety, which has led to schools and districts hiring more constable and school resource officers while implementing safety features into buildings, including metal detectors. So, it seemed like the resolution would be a hit.

Enter Senate Majority Leader Townsend, who proceeded to introduce **Senate Concurrent Resolution 119**. It would establish pretty much the same group Buckson’s bill would, but would be called the Student Behavior and School Climate Task Force. Its goal would be to look at the causes and impact of student behavior issues on the student body.

Another difference is Townsend’s bill would study teacher dissatisfaction. It cited a 2022 American Psychological Association study showing about 50% of teachers are thinking about quitting their job because of a negative school climate.

The introduction of Townsend’s legislation triggered the argument. Buckson said that while drafting his legislation, he was provided bipartisan support as well as help from both chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees, both Democrats. But, there were some changes he was not willing to make.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



TASK FORCE REDEFINING 'FIREARM' MOVES CLOSER TO DECISION

BY JAREK RUTZ

A task force charged with updating the state's definition of "firearm" plans to take one more look next week at the new proposed language. If approved, a bill would be introduced this year proposing the change.

One reason for a new definition is because Delaware has a uniquely general and large definition of a "firearm," in which any device that launches any object by any means is considered a firearm under current law. That would include nail guns, slingshots, crossbows, staplers, archery equipment, Air Soft guns and more if the police or a prosecutor wished to consider them as such.

The task force, headed by Rep. Jeff Spiegelman, R-Claymont and Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, held its eighth Monday. Rep. Cyndie Romer, D-Newark, asked who specifically is negatively impacted by the current definition. Spiegelman said it creates burdens for making laws around guns.

"Especially in the last 12 years, the General Assembly has become increasingly involved in crafting firearms, gun control bills," he said, "and we have found that as we do that, we occasionally run into something and we do something or we almost do something that we didn't intend to do — that the intent is to control the thing that goes 'bang,' not necessarily bow and arrows."

He said it might be impossible to store bow and arrows in the way that Delaware law mandates people store standard guns.

Spiegelman said the current definition doesn't always follow common sense. He pointed to the example of how someone prohibited from using firearms might be using one, per the current definition, every single day on a construction job if they were using a nail gun.

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GREAT STUFF: WALK IN FOR A DEAL, WALK OUT WITH NEW FRIENDS

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

The positive vibe inside Great Stuff Savvy Resale & Home store is palpable the moment you walk into this upscale thrift store. In addition to its attractively displayed designer clothing, accessories and house accents, there's almost always a happy buzz of volunteers, staff and shoppers.

Great Stuff's impact is much wider. Its profits — \$170,000 last year — have been a major source of funds for the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition programs since the store opened in 2010. This year 1,140 Delaware women are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer and 60 are expected to die because of it.

“We needed a way to raise money year-round,” said Katelyn Bender, the coalition's communications direc-

tor. “October is a very popular month to support DBCC but then partnerships tend to slow down.”

For many of the volunteers and shoppers, the store is more than a conduit to a stylish bargain. “The ‘great stuff’ isn't just the clothing and accessories. It's the people,” said breast cancer survivor Jeannine Herrmann of North Wilmington. Herrmann started working at Great Stuff in 2018 after the death of her mom, whom for years she'd been bringing to the store to shop.

“She would have a seat by one of the dressing rooms and the volunteers would fawn all over her and make her feel so special,” Herrmann said.

While the shop has two paid managers, the rest of its staff are volunteers, many of whom either had breast or

another type of cancer, or were close to someone who did. Many become volunteers after first becoming friendly with the staff, like Herrmann.

“I already felt like I was part of the family before volunteering,” said Herrmann, who was diagnosed with breast cancer when she was 33. She's now in her 70s.

On Friday, at least a dozen people — volunteers, staff and shoppers — happily milled about. Galina Chadwick of Wilmington was hunting for vintage treasures, as she regularly does, particularly purses and jewelry.

“Great Stuff has really couture stuff you can't get anywhere else, unless you're in Paris, Rome or New York,” Chadwick said.

She often donates items to Great Stuff while purchasing new stuff from the thrift store. Her favorite find so far has been a classic two-piece Chanel suit. Chadwick said Great Stuff Savvy fills needs other than fulfilling the thrill of thrifting.

“It's environmentally friendly — extending the life of something instead of going out and buying something new,” she said.

Manager Trish Cullen and Assistant Manager Lorena Hendrickson are the only two paid staff members and both say they love coming to work every day. About 50 volunteers rotate shifts, some working in the retail storefront and others handling the intake of donated items in the back. The managers and volunteers often come to know the shoppers, many of whom stop in at least once a week or more often when they have the chance.

Herrmann began volunteering after being diagnosed with breast cancer as a single mom with two young boys.

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photo link: Delaware Ballet

Culture

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YOU'LL PROBABLY PAY MORE FOR BEACH PARKING THIS YEAR

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

Rehoboth, Dewey and Bethany beaches are increasing parking rates this summer, with Rehoboth and Dewey officials citing increased health insurance costs and other expenses. Parking rates for Lewes and Fenwick Island rates will not change. Here's the situation in each Sussex County beach community.

REHOBOTH BEACH

Citing a \$4.4 million deficit in the city's proposed \$37 million budget for fiscal 2025, the Rehoboth Beach Board of Commissioners voted last month to raise the hourly parking meter rate, parking permit fees and rental tax rate.

"These increases are necessary to ensure that we have a highly functioning, appropriately resourced government that provides the outstanding level of service our residents and visitors have come to expect," said Mayor Stan Mills. "We are attempting to spread the burden of

these increases among city stakeholders, so that both our visitors and our residents are vested in and investing in Rehoboth's future," he said.

The 2025 budget is \$2 million more than the current fiscal year, due largely to raises for city staff and a 17% increase in state health insurance costs.

"We don't take our fiscal responsibility nor our responsibility to our team lightly. We have to invest in our most valuable assets, our employees," he said. "(Maintaining Rehoboth's) reputation as a clean, safe and welcoming destination requires significant capital investment as well."

Permits for parking will be up about 30%. Commissioners increased the gross receipts rental tax rate from 6% to 7%, effective on all rental agreements entered into on or after April 1. Commissioners are expected to consider increases to the property tax rate and wastewater rates at their March 15 meeting.

Paid parking runs from May 15 to Sept. 15.

- Hourly: Up \$1, to \$4
- Daily: \$25
- Three-day weekend: \$60
- Weekly: \$120
- Seasonal from Aug. 1 (non-transferable): \$150
- Seasonal from Aug. 1 (transferable): \$165
- Seasonal (non-transferable): \$295
- Seasonal (transferable): \$325
- Scooter (seasonal): \$55

DEWEY BEACH

Dewey Beach's new Town Hall and police station and the state's 17% increase in health insurance costs were reasons City Manager Bill Zolper cited for increasing parking fees.

"Nobody wants to pay more for anything, but we're kind of stuck. This is our only real way to raise revenue," he said.

While Rehoboth can increase rental and property taxes to meet fiscal demands, Dewey has no property tax and the town charter locks rental taxes in at 3%.

Health insurance costs hit hard on the town budget, Zolper said. Dewey has 27 full-time employees, 13 of which are police not on state insurance. The town pays 100% of the health insurance cost for the remaining 14 and their family members. Most towns pay 80% of employee insurance costs and cover 20% for their families, he said.

"To run the town and provide services we have to increase revenue somewhere," Zolper said. "Parking is really the only way to increase revenue in town."

[READ MORE HERE](#)



FOOD SECURITY BACKPACKS LAUNCH DO MORE 24 DELAWARE

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

Spur Impact and **United Way of Delaware** kicked off **Do More 24 Delaware** on Wednesday at the Food Bank of Delaware facility in Milford.

“Do More 24 Delaware is intended to be a unique giving holiday for nonprofits serving Delaware,” said Sarah Carter, the United Way’s manager for Sussex County engagement.

The event invites the public to donate a bit more to their favorite Delaware nonprofits or maybe to find a new cause that interests them among the **500-plus** nonprofits participating in this year’s event. It ran from 6 p.m. Thursday to 6 p.m. Friday, March 8. More than 17,000 **donors** participated last year, donating more than \$2 million. Leaderboards will log leaders in donations and fundraising.

“It is designed to be a fun and easy way for the entire community to impact philanthropy and be inspired to donate to nonprofits serving Delaware,” Carter said.

The goal of Do More 24 Delaware is to inspire the community to come together for a day to contribute as much as they can to the causes they support.

“It is a unique 24-hour giving event that showcases the amazing and vital work of nonprofit organizations serving our state,” she said.

FOOD BANK’S DO MORE 24 FOCUS

This year, the Food Bank of Delaware is raising money for its backpack program. In only an hour Wednesday morning, more than two dozen volunteers and staff members assembled hundreds of weekend meal backpack kits to combat children’s food insecurity in Kent

and Sussex counties. The backpacks are filled with food for weekends and holidays when school is not in session and federal school meal programs are not available.

“One in seven Delaware children are food-insecure,” said Kim Turner, the food bank’s vice president of communications.

Backpacks are stocked with kid-friendly, nutritious food and distributed on Fridays or the last day before a holiday or vacation in a discreet manner at schools, daycares, preschools and other community-based organizations.

More than 25 sponsors this year will provide matching gifts, incentives and rewards, making every donation dollar “do more.”

“Our goal is to ignite a culture of community-wide giving and allow everyone the opportunity to be a philanthropist,” Carter said.

Do More 24 Delaware offers thousands of dollars in unrestricted funding and other cash and non-cash incentives to provide a little excitement, start some friendly competition and help donors make their dollars go further, she said.

“We also want to use Do More 24 Delaware to empower the next generation of donors to be inspired to give to nonprofits and causes they are interested in and passionate about,” Carter said.



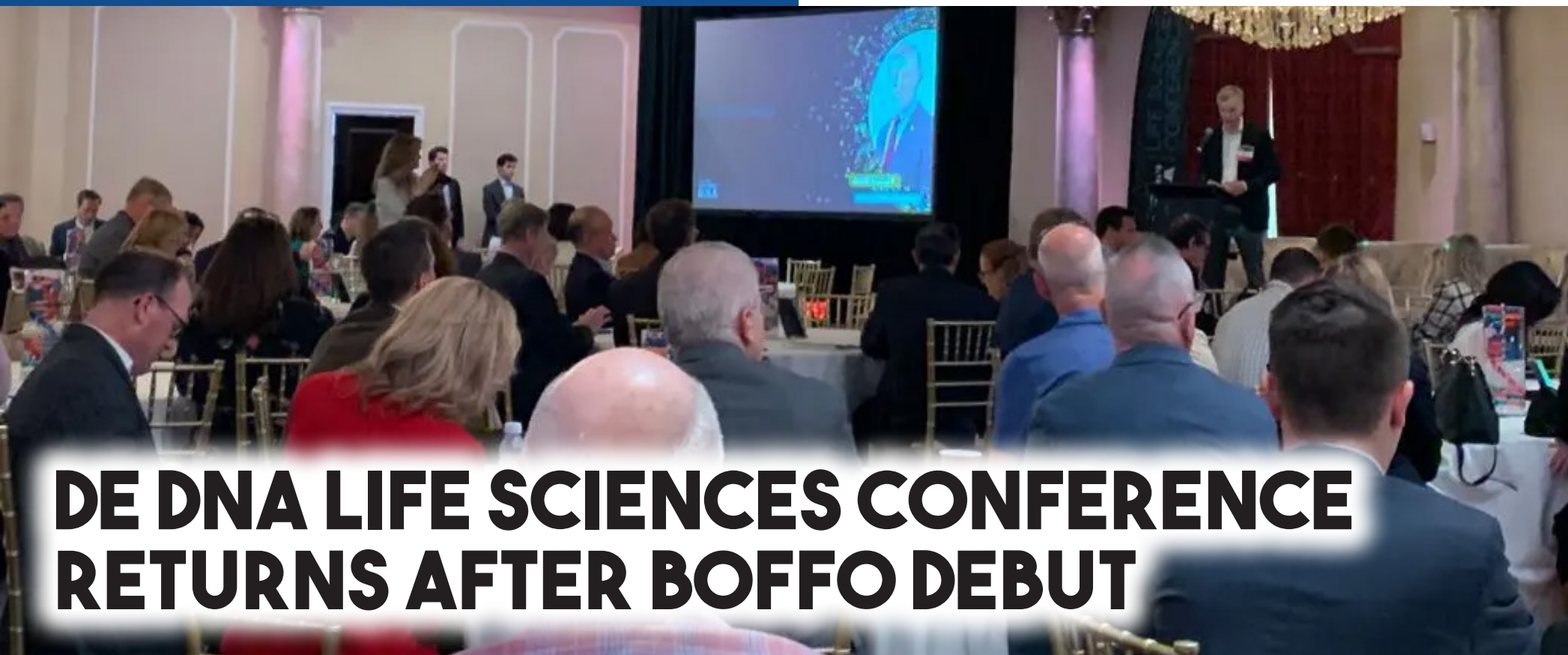


photo link: [Bethany Beach Events & Entertainment](#)

Business

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DE DNA LIFE SCIENCES CONFERENCE RETURNS AFTER BOFFO DEBUT

BY BETSY PRICE

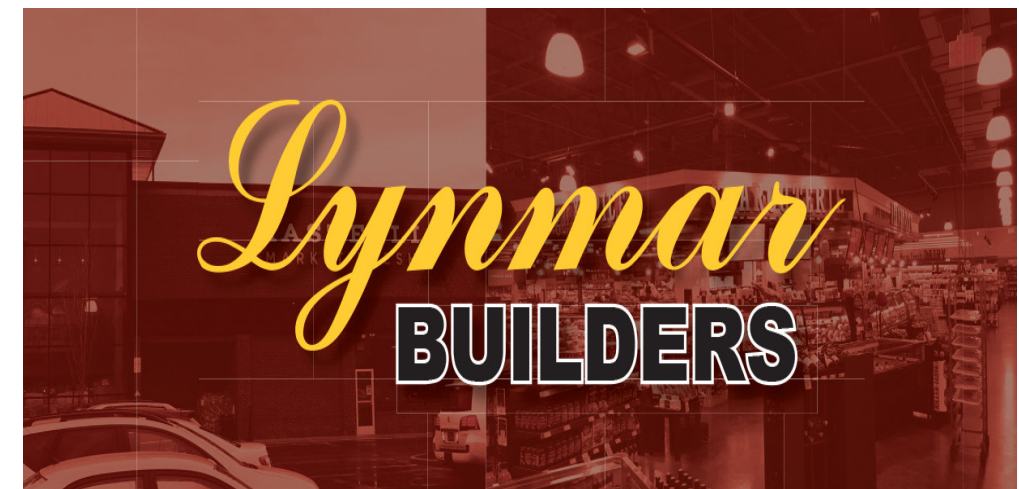
A wildly successful state biosciences conference returns this year with **Delaware's DNA** on May 9. Sponsored by **Delaware BIO**, last year's conference was notable for its energetic vibe, notable speakers and visible networking.

"That was the first time we'd ever put on a full day event like that, focused on really highlighting and showcasing the depth and breadth of the Delaware life sciences ecosystem," said Michael Fleming, president of Delaware BIO.

It has a mission to act as a catalyst for innovation in the biosciences, a sector of the economy important to Delaware's economic future for both jobs and manufacturing. Delaware DNA is believed to be the region's largest bioscience conference and about one-third of the attendees were from eight other states.

This year's program, dubbed Delaware's DNA: 2024 Life Science Conference, will take place May 9 from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the University of Delaware's Clayton Hall in Newark. Fleming says topics will range from the state of the industry, where the life sciences sector is from an investment standpoint, what kind of risks and challenges bio companies face, hot trends and what new technologies and science are transforming the sector and the development of new medicines and other products. The 2023 version attracted 300 people, including local and regional life science executives, investors, new businesses, researchers and policymakers with sessions that included a mix of panels, breakout sessions and presentations.

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Food & Dining

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SLIP INTO 1920S WITH CURED PLATE'S UNIQUE DINING EXPERIENCE

BY PETER OSBORNE

Servers wearing 1920s attire. Light-up menus. Customer-designed charcuterie boards. **The Cured Plate**, which opened Feb. 13, is providing one of the most unique dining experiences in the area and it's proven popular with diners in the region.

The charcuterie-based restaurant, which sources locally, has not had an empty seat since the doors opened and customers are posting rave reviews on social media.

“For most people, this is an experience that you have never had in your life. It’s NOT like a regular restaurant. It’s very small, but very doable, very soft, low lighting! It’s a cozy, ‘chill’ atmosphere,” Cheryl Satterfield Nash posted after her first visit. “Everything is very unique. A terrific place for some good conversation. I expect this place to be a real hit in Milford. My guess is, they’ll have

to find a bigger space, because this idea is so great for this town.”

Nash was not alone in her praise.

“Love the vibe it gives off and the food was amazing,” Joey Shipley commented. “Definitely can see the time and effort put in to present the food, very unique experience and will definitely be back! Fell in love with the place as soon as I walked in.”

Upon entering the new restaurant, guests are greeted by staff wearing 1920s attire. The restaurant is small with several cocktail-style tables in the center that seat two, sofas on each wall with seating for between four and six, plus two U-shaped tables in the front for eight.

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Government

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HANDGUN PERMIT, TRAINING BILL RETURNS TO SENATE FOR VOTE ON CHANGES

Castle, a co-sponsor of the bill, and one sponsored by Republican Rep. Jeffrey Spiegelman, R-Clayton.

Minor-Brown said requiring a training course for people purchasing a gun is not an “undue burden.”

“It’s basic common sense to learn how to safely load, use and store a lethal weapon, which will make both the gun owners and the public safer,” she said.

House Amendment 2 extends the length of time a permit is valid from one year to two, allows local law enforcement agencies to ensure the surrender or removal of handguns purchased with a revoked permit, and removes the training course voucher program.

Spiegelman said Thursday that removing the voucher for the training program could potentially set up an economic barrier to get a permit to get a gun and make the legislation economically discriminatory.

House Amendment 6, sponsored by Spiegelman, would reduce the cost of the required training program and exempt already trained professionals and individuals from the required course.

House Amendment 10 details what information may be retained by the State Bureau of Identification and exempts application information from the Freedom of Information Act.

House Amendment 11 requires that a person whose job training requires firearm training is exempt from repeating it for the permit.

House Republicans proposed several other amendments, however, the majority of these failed.

“I respect that the House felt that some changes were needed to get Senate Bill 2 across the finish line and I am committed to getting their amended version through the Senate and on to Gov. John Carney for his signature,” said Senate Majority Whip Sen. Elizabeth “Tizzy” Lockman, the prime sponsor of SB 2 (S).

Strong permit laws have been found to help prevent gun trafficking and the diversion of guns to criminals, a press release from the House Majority caucus stated.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

After hours of wrangling over 11 proposed amendments Thursday, a bill requiring a permit and training to buy a handgun passed the state House in a different form and was sent back to the Senate for consideration.

Under **Senate Bill 2(S)**, most Delawareans could obtain a permit to purchase a handgun if they have completed an approved firearm training course in the last five years. It would exempt qualified active and retired law enforcement officers and anyone permitted by the state to carry a concealed weapon from that requirement because they already would have been required to complete a firearm training course.

Eleven amendments to the bill were heard on the floor, with the House voting to approve three sponsored by House Majority Leader Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New



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CARNEY'S STATE OF STATE, DESPITE HECKLERS, FOCUSES FORWARD

BY BETSY PRICE

Gov. John Carney's last State of the State speech, meant to be a review of his administration's achievements and a push for the state to tackle thorny issues, was interrupted four times by hecklers who seemed to be referencing the Israeli invasion of Gaza.

The first heckler started shortly into the speech and was removed and a few minutes later another one started up before being removed. Toward the end of the speech, two others began. As Speaker of the House Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, repeatedly hammered her gavel against the desk and point out that the governor was in the house and the sound on the live stream was reduced so it was hard to hear what the hecklers said.

When he was able to speak unimpeded, Carney pleaded with the General Assembly to think ahead and pass

a bill that would block uncontrolled government spending.

"It's really pretty simple," he said. "Delaware can't compete in the future if we don't have our budget in order." A future governor or legislature could head down a path of uncontrolled spending, which would lead to higher taxes and painful cuts, he said.

He started office with a \$400 million deficit and is expected to leave office with \$400 million in reserves. "Let's not go backwards," Carney said. "Instead, let's build on the progress we've made. This year, I'm asking you to send me legislation that would make our spending benchmark permanent."

That benchmark is a formula that looks at proposed revenues and sets a limit to spending, with some money

left in surplus.

"This year, I'm asking you to send me legislation that would make our spending benchmark permanent," he said. "I won't be here next year. I know some of you are happy about that. But most of you will. Don't set yourselves up for failure."

Carney also warned that the state cannot afford to ignore the escalating cost of health care.

"This year, between Medicaid and our insurance plan for state employees and retirees, we're spending nearly \$2 billion on health care alone," he said. "Let me say that again: \$2 BILLION—with a B. That's roughly \$200 million more than our costs last year. The state's share of Medicaid alone costs \$1 billion."

Carney's speech originally was scheduled for January, but postponed after he fell ill. As usual, he was welcomed into Legislative Hall with a rousing round of applause.

STARTING STATE WITH FEMALE POWER

Carney started his speech by noting that for the first time, a female Speaker of the House is presiding over the State of the State address. [Rep. Valerie Longhurst](#), D-Bear, was elected speaker last June after Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, stepped down to spend more time with family. Also for the first time, the House leadership is all women: Majority Leader Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle, Majority Whip Kerri Evelyn Harris, D-Dover/Magnolia, and Joint Finance Chief Kim Williams, D-D-Marshallton.

He also thanked his wife, Tracey, saying she "has transformed the role of the First Lady, we like to call her the First Spouse — and made sure every Delaware child has a First Chance to succeed."

[READ MORE HERE](#)



BY BETSY PRICE

Republican senators said Tuesday they were disappointed at the hecklers interrupting Gov. John Carney's last State of the State speech — and even more disappointed in the members of the legislature smirking during the heckling.

A video shows the first heckler, a woman in the gallery wearing a pink hijab, start shouting and asking for a moment of silence. As security approached her to remove her from the gallery, she continued shouting over her shoulder. "Because when we send our children away, it should be an honor defending our country, not to be complicit in genocide," she said. "Senators, speak up. That's all I came for. Senators, speak up." Her voice became hard to understand as she was moved along.

"Whether you agree or disagree with what the governor is saying, there's a certain respect that you should

GOP SENATORS: HECKLERS, SMIRKING LEGISLATORS 'EMBARRASSMENT'

have for the institution that's here for this building," said Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown. "And to have certain members of the General Assembly that were smirking in glee that those things were happening is extremely disappointing and it shows you just how far we've come as a state, as a society, when the chief executive of our state is interrupted five different times with things that aren't even state issues."

He and Senate Minority Leader Gerald Hocker, R-Ocean View, didn't say who the legislators were. Pettyjohn said the hecklers, all of whom were sitting upstairs, focused on "what is happening over in the Middle East with Israel and how they were attacked."

Hocker said the six members of the Senate Republican Caucus had written Carney a note apologizing for the behavior during his speech. "No one wants to see that," he said. "That wasn't the place."

During a session designed to let the Republicans react to Carney's speech, Pettyjohn cited the treatment of the governor and a debate in the Senate between Sen. Brian Townsend, D-Newark, and Sen. Erik Buckson, R-Dover, over Buckson's bill about classroom discipline as an example of a decline in civility.

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BILL GIVING TEACHERS 1-FOR-1 SICK DAY DONATION HEADS TO HOUSE

BY JAREK RUTZ

A buy-one-get-two deal is a bargain at a grocery store, but not so ideal for teachers looking to exchange days off. A new law could even the scales.

Senate Bill 20, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark, removes the requirement that a public school district employee who donates leave to another employee must donate two days of leave for the other employee to receive one day of leave. After a brief discussion on the Senate floor Tuesday, the bill passed unanimously.

The act is named in honor of Christopher Chujoy, a special education instructional aide in the **Red Clay Consolidated School District** who was diagnosed in August 2022 with stage IV cancer. “He was just an absolutely inspirational person, that kind of educator that you hope is educating your children,” Townsend said. “There’s just an energy of enthusiasm, of spirit about him both in staring down his triple diagnosis but also

in talking about his role as an educator.”

Chujoy used up all of his available sick time before dying and his situation raised the issue that is the primary purpose of SB 20.

ONE-TO-ONE TEACHER DONATION FAIR

Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, said the one-to-one leave is only fair.

Tammy Croce, executive director of the **Delaware Association of School Administrators**, testified in January that her organization is in full support of the law, pointing out that when the two-for-one ratio was set, there weren’t programs set up like short-term disability pay, FMLA and paid parental leave.

“It’s a good bill, and I’m excited about supporting it,” said Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover and a member of the Senate Education Committee.

“As a 30-year educator, what you may not know is I’ve gotten into a fight with cancer myself and I’ve seen the

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emails where they go across the airwaves saying, ‘Hey, can you give some of your sick time to some of your colleagues,’” Buckson said, “and it was always a challenge, because you had to give two of yours to give add one to theirs.”

The bill also:

- Clarifies how much leave employees of a public school district who do not accrue annual leave must use before being eligible for donated leave.
- Clarifies the interaction between donated leave and leave available under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act.

There is no fiscal impact on the state if the bill becomes law. SB 20 heads to the House, where it will first be heard by a committee and then the entire House floor. If successful at both stops, the bill will head to the governor’s desk for signature to become law.

DELAWARE
LIVE



BILL CAPPING CAR DEALERSHIP PROCESSING FEES HEAD TO HOUSE

BY JAREK RUTZ

A proposed law in Delaware would provide free breakfast and lunch to all students — with a price tag of \$120 million over the next three years — moves on after debate. **House Bill 125**, sponsored by Rep. Sherae'a Moore, D-Middletown, sparked a healthy discussion in the House Education Committee meeting Wednesday.

The bill points out that during the 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 original fiscal note of the bill

had state costs that included:

- \$38,866,149 (\$8,475,484 for breakfast and \$30,390,665 for lunch) in fiscal year 2025
- \$40,665,131 (\$8,806,214 for breakfast and \$31,858,917 for lunch) in fiscal year 2026
- \$42,558,736 (\$9,184,993 for breakfast and \$33,373,744 for lunch) in fiscal year 2027

One breakfast for one student is estimated to cost the state between 30 cents and \$2.35 depending on the need level of the school, and one lunch for one student is estimated to cost the state between 40 cents and \$3.85. There is no cost to the state for federally reimbursed free breakfasts or lunches. Approximately 10,435,690 breakfasts and 18,268,270 lunches are served in Dela-

ware schools each year.

Several legislators on both sides of the aisle believed that the state cost was too hefty and children in affluent families don't necessarily need free meals at the cost of taxpayer dollars. Rep. Valerie Jones Giltner, R-Georgetown, said there's families in Delaware who simply do not need to have free meals. She suggested some sort of means testing to only provide free meals to a certain number of students who need it based on their family's economic situation.

Rep. Stell Parker Selby, D-Milton, who spent 34 years as an educator in public schools, agreed that not every student needs a free meal.

While the meals would be funded with taxpayer dollars, Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, pointed out that the bill does not call for a tax increase.

Rep. Sean Lynn, D-Dover, called his fellow legislators out, saying that they don't bat an eye to spend millions of dollars on other needs, but spend so much time debating something that would benefit Delaware's future. He acknowledged the hefty state cost, but said if there's one thing he's willing to take a risk on, it's the students of the First State.

Parker Selby, while against the bill, said she loves the idea of making sure everyone is fed and wanted to create ways to make sure students who are currently given free meals aren't stigmatized in any way.

Rep. Nnamdi Chukwuocha, D-Wilmington, threw another topic into the discussion, bringing up the fact that there's a ton of food waste. He said he's in low-income schools a lot and cafeteria workers can confirm that there's tons of food that goes to waste.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



BILL CAPPING CAR DEALERSHIP PROCESSING FEES HEAD TO HOUSE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Whether it be buying tickets to a favorite artist or sports team, paying a parking ticket, or even gifting a car to a family member, the public is hit with pesky processing fees that inflate their purchase costs. Delaware has no cap on motor vehicle dealer processing fees, which permits dealers to arbitrarily charge whatever amounts they wish, leading to great discrepancy of these fees among dealers and a lack of protection for consumers.

House Bill 295, sponsored by Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, would place a cap of \$475 on the dealer processing fee, which is similar to neighboring states Pennsylvania (\$449) and Maryland (\$500).

In Tuesday's House Public Safety & Homeland Security Committee meeting, Baumbach said the idea for the bill arose when Senate President Pro Tempore Dave Sokola, D-Newark, purchased a car recently and was hit with a \$600 processing fee. He said the average processing fee in Delaware is \$475, which matches the cap included in the bill. Committee Chair Rep. Franklin Cooke, D-New Castle, wanted to make sure the Division of Motor Vehicles approved the bill, which Baumbach confirmed.

HB 295 also defines "dealer processing fee" as an amount charged by a dealer for any of the following:

- The preparation of written documentation concerning the buying, selling or exchange of the vehicle.
- Obtaining the title and license plates for the vehicle.
- Obtaining a release of lien.
- Filing title documents with the Department of Transportation.
- Retaining documents concerning the buying, selling or exchange of the vehicle.
- Complying with federal or state privacy laws.
- Other administrative services concerning the buying, selling or exchange of the vehicle.

There is no fiscal impact on the state if the bill becomes law. HB 295 was voted for unanimously and will now head to the House floor for consideration.

Also discussed in Tuesday's hearing was **House Bill 19**, sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, which would create a background special license plate for the United Way of Delaware Pride Council. A background special license plate supports a cause and is available for purchase by the public. The numbers, letters or both, assigned must be the same as the license plate assigned to the owner's vehicle at the time of the application for the plate. The plates would cost a one-time fee of \$50, and \$35 of that would go to the Pride Council.

HB 19 also heads to the House floor to be voted on by the entire chamber.



NEW BILL COULD PENALIZE THOSE LYING ABOUT SERVICE ANIMAL

BY JAREK RUTZ

A proposed law in Delaware would punish residents who lie about their animal being a service or assistance animal. Sponsored by Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel, and Rep. Danny Short, R-Seaford, [Senate Bill 219](#) would create penalties for misrepresentation of a service animal under the Delaware Equal Accommodations Law and misrepresentation of an assistance animal under the Delaware Fair Housing Act. A first violation would be a civil penalty in the amount of \$500 and each subsequent offense is an unclassified misdemeanor.

The bill defines a person guilty of misrepresentation as anyone that:

- Misrepresents that the person has a disability for which the animal is trained to do work or perform tasks for.
- Misrepresents an animal as a service animal by fitting an animal that is not a service animal with an item that states that it is a service animal, such as a harness, collar, vest or sign.

“Service animals deserve proper recognition for the work that they do and should receive all liberties that accompany that designation,” Lawson said. “This bill will address the issue of false service/assistance animal classification that has gone on for far too long.”

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Short pointed out that state law ensures that people needing service animals are not discriminated against when it comes to finding a place to live.

“This proposal seeks to crack down on those engaging in fraud and misusing this law,” he said. “It’ll protect landlords from being taken advantage of and preserve the legal rights of service animal owners from being discredited and undermined.”

SB 219 will first be heard in the Senate Banking, Business, Insurance and Technology Committee.



photo link: Sussex Central High School



Education

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BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware’s lawmakers got their first taste Thursday of a landmark, 200-page report from the [American Institutes for Research](#) that suggested the state invest up to 50% more in public education. The report was released in December at an event that only a few legislators attended, and on Thursday, it was introduced to the General Assembly in a joint House and Senate Education Committee meeting.

Stakeholders have been digesting the report over the past few months, but no action has been taken yet.

“Our next step...is to educate people about what the report says and what it means, and once we’re fully educated, then we’ll make decisions about what we need to do going forward,” said Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin and chair of the Senate Education Committee. Sturgeon also worked as a public school teacher for 25 years.

LEGISLATORS BRIEFED ON LANDMARK SCHOOL FUNDING REPORT

Thursday’s presentation was led by Drew Atchison, a senior researcher at the American Institutes for Research, who also presented in December’s launch.

The state paid \$700,000 for the report, which filled with data on funding discrepancies from district to district and state to state; the lack of funding for high-needs students in Delaware, such as English learners, low-income students, students with disabilities and more, who would get multiple times more funding in other states; and the sharp decline in academic success, specifically with state and national standardized tests, in Delaware since 2013.

After a couple legislators said directly or implied that Delaware is “middle of the pack,” Britney Mumford, executive director of [DelawareCAN](#), an education advocacy group, said in public comment that it is “facetious to say the state is middle of the pack.” She then shared a slew of rankings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress test, which Delaware ranked 45 or worse in every category on the test, such as fourth-grade math and eighth grade English language arts.

Atchison’s presentation Thursday was almost identical to his [presentation](#) in December.

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MILFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT CLOSED AFTER TWO SCHOOLS ON LOCKDOWN THURSDAY

BY JAREK RUTZ

Several schools in the Milford School District were placed on lockdown Thursday afternoon after a “credible threat was made toward Milford School District schools and offices.” The entire district was closed Friday. The district and the Milford Police Department said they cannot comment on what the threat was at this time, but Milford High School and Milford Central Academy were put on lockdown Thursday.

“Once it was determined that the threat did not pertain to our elementary schools, they were dismissed as scheduled without disruption or harm,” the district stated. “Dismissal was delayed at the secondary campus until police could ensure safe transition of all students and staff.”

All after-school activities were canceled Thursday.

The district said it sincerely appreciates the support of staff, students and families as it navigated through the threat. There appears to be no one harmed after the lockdowns.

“The safety of our students, staff and community is our top priority,” the district stated. “It is important to note that during a threat, we have specific protocols in place to ensure the safety of everyone on our campuses.

“We continue to ask for your patience and cooperation allowing the district to communicate and provide direction as needed.”

The district declined to detail its lockdown protocols and safety measures for students.

District leadership and Milford Police are still investigating this situation and will communicate any addi-



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tional information as needed.

Just after 5 a.m. Friday, the district’s Facebook page announced the closure for the day. Several parents in the comments said they wish the district would provide more details, as the lack of clarity leads to rumors. Others said they understood the ongoing investigation leads to little information being made available to the public, and thanked the district for taking their children’s safety seriously.

On Thursday, the Milford Police also asked for public assistance in its attempt to locate Thomas Caffrey, a 59-year-old male from Lincoln, who investigators say they want to speak with regarding a terroristic threatening incident that occurred within Milford city limits.

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WILMU, CODE DIFFERENTLY TEAM UP FOR 18 CREDIT OPPORTUNITY IN TECH

“This collaboration with Code Differently speaks to our mission of providing opportunity and flexibility to students and it also addresses our comprehensive focus on technology,” said LaVerne Harmon, WilmU president.

Harmon said the school understands the high demand for skilled information technology professionals, and she suspects that need will continue to grow. “This partnership reflects an opportunity for innovation to meet accessibility in higher education,” she said.

Stephanie Eldridge, CEO and co-founder of Code Differently, said the organization wants to eliminate barriers to learning and success, and is committed to the advancement of all of its participants.

Lindsay Rice, the WilmU’s senior director of Academic Partnerships, said the partnership leverages what its participants have learned and provides an easy transfer to bachelor’s programs directly connecting to Code Differently programs.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

BY JAREK RUTZ

A new partnership between **Wilmington University** and a national coding group will provide Delaware residents the opportunity to earn a big chunk of college credits in concentrations like computer science, cybersecurity and data analysis. The university has partnered with **Code Differently**, which provides hands-on training and education through coding classes that gives participants the technical and cognitive skills they need to succeed in technology-driven workplaces.

The partnership, announced Tuesday, provides Code Differently participants up to 18 college credits at WilmU. Since its establishment in 2018, 800 First State adults have received software development training from Code Differently, with an 89% completion rate and an 85% work-placement rate. According to the organization, the most recent group of participants included 15 students who started the 20-week coding course in February.

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MIDDLETOWN HS TO STAGE HARRY POTTER 'CURSED CHILD' THIS FALL

BY JAREK RUTZ

The magic of Hogwarts is headed to 27 high schools in America — including one in the First State. **Middletown High School** in **Appoquinimink School District** will be full of wizards and wands Nov. 8-10 as its theater crew of more than 60 students in four performances of J.K. Rowling's "**Harry Potter and the Cursed Child**".

"We're expecting more to participate with this just because it's Harry Potter," said Brianna Barkus, a biology teacher in Appo who helps with theater productions. She described herself as the "right hand man" of Middletown's Theater Director Jeff Dietzler.

Dietzler said the school applied in November 2023 for the licensing rights to the play, which included a video showcasing why the school is a magical place. They also had to describe certain characteristics of the school like how it's inclusive and an environment that everyone can be a part of.

The two weren't positive they wanted to apply, but Barkus was given an opportunity to see the show on Broadway for just \$40.

"It was funny because we decided to use that for our application video," Dietzler said. "Part of our video, at the start, we kind of set it up like we were doing wizardry ...I was like 'We have to go see this' and we hid her under a platform and then made it seem like she disappeared and then in the video she popped up at the Broadway theater in a telephone booth and magically appeared."

The fandom of the Harry Potter series spans ages, and Dietzler and Barkus said they've been congratulated and bombarded with excitement from both teachers and students. Barkus said a wave of elation spread through the theater students once Dietzler started playing Harry Potter music and told them they were selected to perform.



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While magic and special effects are integral to the show, Dietzler said the high school renditions are scaled down a bit from the fiery theatrics of the Broadway show. Barkus joked that there will not be pyrotechnics in their high school auditorium.

"At one point they had like a literal pool on the stage, acting as a lake," she said. "That's not going to be in our product, we're not going to fill the pit with water."

But, Dietzler said, trying to make the show magical and incorporating special effects is part of the eight-month process leading up to the shows.

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Sports

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DOVER AND SALESIANUM ADVANCE TO STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

BY GLENN FRAZER

The second seeded Dover Senators and fourth seed Salesianum advanced to the boys' basketball final with wins Thursday night at a "sold out" Bob Carpenter Center. For the defending state champion Sals, it will be the third straight appearance in the final. They fell to Tower Hill two years ago and won the school's third title last season versus William Penn.

The Sals and top seed St. Elizabeth were scoreless through the opening 4:10 of their semifinal game before Justin Hinds drained a three-point shot. It was a harbinger of things to come as Salesianum made eight of 14 shots beyond the arc for an impressive 57% success ratio. In fact, the Sals shot a better percentage from long range than they did from the floor (41%).

Salesianum held a first quarter lead of 14-8 and also held the Vikings' leading scorer (Aiden Tobiason) without a point until midway through the second quarter. When Tobiason finally got on the board, it ignited a

13-2 run for St-E to finish the half and take a 29-27 advantage into the locker room. The final points of the half came on a Tobiason three-pointer just before the buzzer.

A competitive third quarter featured outstanding shooting by both teams. The Vikings and Sals combined to go a perfect 18 for 18 from the foul line for the game until the 2:09 mark. Through three quarters, the two combined to "nail" 20 of 22 free throws. Salesianum continued its torrid long-range efficiency, connecting on six of eight three-pointers until late in the third frame, giving them a 45-40 lead entering the final eight minutes of the contest.

The fourth quarter belonged to Sallies as Isaiah Hynson scored five straight points before Kareem Thomas connected on a corner "three" to put his team up by 11. Salesianum was never threatened the rest of the way, securing a semifinal win of 65-51. Thomas led the way with 24 points (19 in the second half alone), going 3-for-

4 beyond the arc and making 11 of 13 foul shots. R-J Johnson was a "force" in the paint, scoring 16 points and pulling down 10 rebounds. Hynson contributed 13 points, while Hinds added 10 more and grabbed eight rebounds.

Tobiason finished the game with 19 points and five "boards", and Steven Nixon also scored in double figures with 12 to go along with nine rebounds and three assists for the Vikings.

In the other semifinal, Dover defeated Middletown 59-53. The Senators and Cavaliers were tied at 8-8 before Dover went on a run of 7-0 to close out the opening quarter. The fast-paced game saw the two trade baskets in the second quarter as Dover took a lead of 27-22 at the half.

Middletown made a nice run to start the second half. Eric Mathenge scored on a "nifty" layup and the Cavs held the advantage at 35-33 with 2:24 to go in the third. However, the Senators had an answer, going on a 9-0 run highlighted by a JayVion Denis "three" point make as Dover held a four-point lead going into the final eight. Middletown's Mathenge nailed a long-range jumper with 22 seconds left to pull the Cavs within striking distance at 42-28.

Middletown's Jack Murdaugh made a "deep" three to start the fourth quarter and the Cavaliers were down by a single point at 42-41. Dover responded with baskets from Denim Perkins and Dorrel Little and with under five to go the lead was 46-42. That is as close as the Cavs would get. Dover extended the lead to 10 points over the next 90 seconds as Perkins stole the ball and made a breakaway layup.

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PIVOTAL THIRD QUARTERS PROPEL URSULINE AND CARAVEL TO CHAMPIONSHIP

BY GLENN FRAZER

The two top seeds advanced to the DIAA girls' basketball championship game with wins Wednesday night at the Bob Carpenter Center. A dominating performance in the third quarter was the difference for both top seed Caravel and No. 2 seeded Ursuline.

In the opening semifinal, Sanford held a 19-11 lead to begin the second half. Then Ursuline went on a 16-0 run highlighted by Jezelle "G-G" Banks and Jazlyn Wesley in the third quarter as the Raiders out-scored the Warriors 18-3 for a 29-22 advantage. Sanford rallied midway through the fourth quarter, slicing the deficit to a single point twice late, but could not overtake Ursuline. A desperation three-point shot failed, giving the Raiders a 37-34 win.

Both teams struggled to score in the first half as Ursuline shot just 15% from the floor and the Warriors managed to convert seven of 22 shots for a 32% field goal percentage. Sanford hit two of three long-range shots in the first half, but failed to connect on eight attempts over the final 16 minutes.

The Raiders were led by Banks with 19 points and five assists, while Wesley had a "double-double" with 11 rebounds and 10 points plus she blocked five shots. No school has won more state titles than the Raiders as they attempt to gain a 18th championship Saturday when they meet top-seeded Caravel.

Ironically, an identical third quarter performance by Caravel led to the Buccaneers win in the second semifinal Wednesday night. The Bucs out scored A.I. DuPont 18-3 in that frame to take a huge lead into the final eight of the game at 42-20.

Caravel out-rebounded the Tigers 52-24 with 25 of those coming on the offensive glass. Unlike the regular season meeting when the Bucs held a commanding 41-7 lead at the half, the Tigers "hustled" to fight for the "50-50" balls and played very well defensively to trail by just 24-17 at the break. However, Caravel used a "suffocating" defense in the game's final 16 minutes to advance with a 66-27 victory.

The Buccaneers had advantages of 31-7 in points off turnovers and 28-3 in "fast break" points. Most of those were scored by guard Chasity "Speedy" Wilson on break away layups as she ended the game with 30 points, seven steals and five rebounds. Cherish Bryant added 11 points and 11 rebounds. Brycelyn Strykning was also very active in the paint, recording four blocks, grabbing seven boards and scoring eight points. As a team, Caravel shot 42% from the floor, 67% from the foul line and 17% beyond the arc. Senior Sydney Hilliard paced the Tigers with 18 points and six rebounds. The senior made all four of the team's three-point shots, shooting 40% beyond the arc.

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